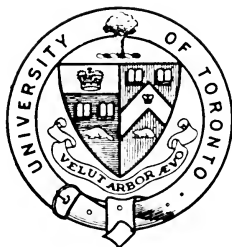




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# FRIENDS IN COUNCIL

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DISCOURSE THEREON

*Arthur Helps.*

Second Series



LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1879

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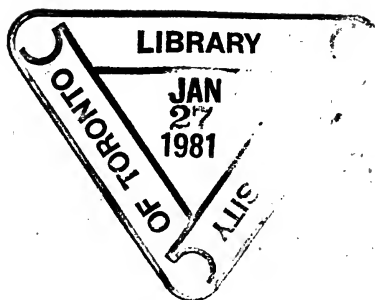
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## ADDRESS TO THE READER.

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I THINK it is desirable for the reader of this work to know that the Essay on War was written some time ago, when the peace of Europe had not been disturbed. That essay was directed chiefly against the growing practice of maintaining large standing armies in times of peace, which was then a constant cause of apprehensiveness to those who thought at all upon the subject. Their fears have been but too well justified by the result. It must not, however, be imagined that the "friends" who took part in that discussion upon war would be blind to the dangers of their country, when war had once begun between two great European powers, or that they would counsel remissness in a judicious preparation for the contingency of war. I venture to use the word "judicious," because, if much judgment is not used, a large part of the expenditure will infallibly be wasted. That, however, is a question for men versed in the science of war. What I have to bring before the reader is the point of view from which the "Friends in Council"

had to consider the question of war, and to recall to his mind a time, not so far back, when our alliances were supposed to be firm, faithful, and confiding, and when it was not imagined that any disturbance was likely to arise in Europe, which diplomacy could not easily compose.

On the termination of the present war the maintenance of large standing armies in times of peace will again become the great question for the world. These standing armies add somewhat to the cares and burdens of every grown-up person throughout Europe. Quite putting aside all moral considerations (indeed Christianity has long been out of the question, and *Te Deums* are sung where *Misereres* would be far more appropriate), mere household prudence should make it one of the first cares of all good citizens to diminish these monstrous armies. If mankind were really much advanced in civilisation, there would be a federation amongst the sensible and influential people of all nations to prevent monarchs from being entrusted with these large means for molesting the human race.

Individually, we are much in advance of the inhabitants of those barbarous nations, where slaughter is the only claim to renown. The savage Indian had no other way to power or to any success in life, but in procuring the death of his enemies. Hung round with scalps, he

sought the rewarding smile and sure caress of his beloved, and by the same joyous trophies he gained the acclamation of the people over whom he desired to have sway. We have advanced a little beyond that ; but it remains for the European people to prevent their monarchs from seeking distinction in this barbarous method, and becoming great according to the numbers they might proudly show of enemies' scalps taken in battle.

There is no longer any occasion for us Europeans to prove our prowess. If we take the five great Powers of Europe—Austrians, British, French, Prussians, and Russians—each of these nations has shown in a hundred fights that they are as brave as men need be. They might really repose upon their laurels ; and, as the greatest part of them live comparatively in a squalid state, they might turn their attention to those improvements in the arts of life which are so much wanted in every European nation.

Among the people especially to be pitied, if a general war should arise, the British labourer and the Russian peasant might claim a high place. Making but small account of glory ; not prone in the first instance to war, though splendidly tenacious<sup>1</sup> in battle when it does

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick the Great, after thoroughly beating the Russian army on some occasion, could not get it off the field, because it

come ; with the greatest hopes before them of large improvement in their condition—for the British labourer, increasing attention given to his welfare at home, and new opportunities of emigration ; for the Russian, a prospect of freedom, and then the peaceful conquest of his own wide lands ;—they are of all men those who should be most reluctantly condemned to warfare.

Our statesmen are, I believe, thoroughly anxious to save their countrymen from this calamity. It is vain, I fear, to hope that the words of any private man will ever reach the Autocrat of All the Russias. But if he could know how many persons in this country—persons whose good opinion no man would be above desiring—have watched his career since he came to the throne and sympathised with him in his untiring efforts to abolish serfdom, he might perhaps feel a sorrow like their sorrow if forced to divert his mind from such beneficent enterprises to the commonplace despotic amusement of war.

Lord Stanley, speaking of the present war, said justly, “ It will be a war wantonly, needlessly, and I will say, wickedly made. It will be a war dictated by the ambition of a few men placed in too high a position above the masses of mankind to feel that respect for human rights or that sympathy for human suffering, a due regard

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would remain there ; and it was impossible in the time to slay so many human beings.



for which forms the bonds by which the human race is banded together.”<sup>1</sup> No success in arms should make us forget the truth contained in these words. There is still some force in public opinion as it exists throughout Europe ; and, when the fitting time comes, a steady protest may yet be made against the inhumanity of those who force on difficult questions to the sole arbitrament of war, and especially against those who perpetuate the system of warfare by the maintenance of excessive standing armies.

I make no apology for the length of this address to the reader. These thoughts about war are, I believe, in most men’s minds ; and, if not, they ought to be. When Europe is exposed to the risk of relapsing into large and continued warfare, and when our thoughts are greatly given to the problem of how the most men can be killed in the shortest possible time (a problem, by the way, which the British with their singular mechanical skill will be the first to solve, when they give their attention to it), no person, however obscure, should omit the opportunity of doing what he can to restrain the waste of blood, of treasure, and of thought, which is imminent for the present generation.

It was with this view that the Essay in question was originally written ; but then an immediate war was

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<sup>1</sup> *Address to the Electors of King’s Lynn.*

scarcely in any man's contemplation, and the question was, as the question will be again, of the hazard and injury to mankind arising from the maintenance of excessive armies in times of peace.

*London, July 7th, 1859.*

P.S. At this Harlequin period of the world, what is written on public affairs in any one week may be, or at least may seem, obsolete and inapplicable in the course of the next. The peace, distantly looked forward to in the foregoing Address, has come. The chief difficulty, however, contemplated in that Address still remains for solution.

*July 15th, 1859.*

## INTRODUCTION.

**A**N exquisite thing is good conversation. It winds round and round the subject. It has such charming pauses and interruptions : it is not merely like real life ; it is real life. I think, too, it is not only very beautiful but very useful. I believe that if a man were to look back upon some of the most important resolves that he has taken in the course of his life, he would find that they have been greatly influenced by what he has heard in a chance way in good conversation. I often pity the lower animals for their want of talk. To be sure, there is the lowing of kine ; there are the songs of birds, which Milverton, who hates their noise, always calls twittering ; there is the grand roar of wild beasts in deep forests ; and there are the queer whistlings, shriekings, hootings and other unaccountable noises of the lower animals, which for my part I like to hear, because I am sure they convey some meaning, and are well understood by kindred creatures. I dare say that love, hatred, joyousness, and terror, are well enough expressed by these sounds. But where are the quips, the cranks, the bright jests, the pompous periods, the sly rejoinders, the hard conclusions of inexorable logic, which belong to good human talk ? If there is an Ellesmere in the

lower creation—some strange outlandish bird it may be—how does it manage to express its sensations? Imagine a humorous animal (and sometimes I fancy, from the look of their eyes and the curling of their noses that there are such creatures): how puzzled it must be to find a vehicle for its humour.

“Sir, we had good talk.” What a keen sense of enjoyment is expressed in those few words of Dr. Johnson’s. And a modern American philosopher has said, not without some reason, that all the means and appliances of civilisation culminate in bringing together, round a table, in a warm comfortable room, three or four intelligent people to talk pleasantly.

All other forms of composition are, comparatively speaking, elaborate works of art. When I read or listen to speeches, sermons, essays, novels, epics, sonnets,—especially sonnets—I seem to be walking in the trim gardens of our ancestors; but when I listen to good talk, it is like surveying the natural landscape, which does not, at first sight, convey a distinct meaning and purpose; but gradually a result appears in some influence or other upon one’s mind; and that result comes sweetly, softly, and undeniably.

In thus extolling conversation I magnify my office as a reporter of conversations, but if one did not magnify one’s office, one would be a miserable person; and surely any reporter at the Bar, or in the Senate, must feel almost as if he made (sometimes he does make a good part of them) the brilliant speeches he reports.

We "Friends in Council" are of course somewhat older men than when we first began to meet in friendly conclave; and I have observed as men go on in life they are less and less inclined to be didactic. They have found out that nothing is, didactically speaking, true. They long for exceptions, modifications, allowances. A boy is clear, sharp, decisive in his talk. He would have this. He would do that. He hates this; he loves that: and his loves or his hatreds admit of no exception. He is sure that the one thing is quite right, and the other quite wrong. He is not troubled with doubts. He knows.

I see now why, as men go on in life, they delight in anecdotes. These tell so much, and argue, or pronounce directly, so little.

The friendship of Milverton and Ellesmere is not altered. Indeed, the friendship of such men seldom does alter. To me, too, they are just the same, showing as much respect, and sometimes (as in Ellesmere's case) as little, as they used to do in the conversations I have formerly reported. Mildred and Blanche, two cousins of Milverton's, have now grown up into young women, and occasionally take some part in our conversations, as much as women generally do in conversation. We shall also have another interlocutor, Mr. Midhurst, an older man than Milverton or Ellesmere, of whom I would rather say nothing; at least as regards his character, for I do not understand it.

In person Mr. Midhurst resembles a portrait there is of the great Lord Clarendon by Sir Peter Lely. He has the same burly, dignified figure, and the same acute, thoughtful countenance. The moment I saw Mr. Midhurst, I was reminded of this picture; and the likeness would be complete, but that Mr. Midhurst has a far more melancholy look than Charles's Chancellor, and has that form of lip which is said to indicate an exceeding appreciation of the good things of this life.

The time and place of our conversations have varied, as the reader will see, very much. I cannot pretend to give those times and places very accurately, or to assert that they will come in any regular order. Occasionally, the choicest companions are somewhat dull, especially when they are happy and at ease in each other's society; and I only undertake to report those conversations which seem to me interesting. I am not the Boswell to these younger men, my pupils (for as such I still regard them), and I cannot undertake to record every trivial word that they have uttered, or trivial thing that they have done. I cannot speculate about my Dr. Johnsons, as Boswell did about his, when he noticed, and gravely put down as a thing that had perplexed him, the fact that his great man was in the habit of putting aside bits of orange-peel.

I will not linger more in giving preparatory explanations, but simply describe how it was that we came to go abroad, and that most of the conversations about to be recorded took place at different towns on the Continent.

We were sauntering about Milverton's garden, and

were all of us in a very tired and stupid state of mind. I had not been away from my parish duties for two years. Ellesmere had gone through a laborious session, and Milverton was over-worked and over-fatigued, though ready, as usual, to discuss any question that might come before him. Still, there was an absence of life and animation even in him, and he was discoursing at the moment about the number of failures that there are in life, amongst public men, for instance ; and how the most signal downfalls and disasters often come on at a time of life when they are utterly irreparable ; “ and,” he added :—“ I should like to write a book all full of consolation, so that when men were more vexed and unhappy than usual, they should turn to the thoughts of Leonard Milverton to see whether any small comfort could be got out of them. I say small comfort, because the great sources of comfort would have to be looked for in books of higher purpose, but mine should only aim at minor consolations.” I interrupted him as follows :—

*Dunsford.* One of the most remarkable attempts at consolation that I know is in a letter from Queen Elizabeth to some Earl and Countess who had just lost a son. I do not remember the words, but I cannot think where I saw the letter (I believe you pointed it out to me, Milverton), but the course of the argument was this :—In time you will be comforted. Why should not present reasoning about a calamity do as much for you as the lapse of time?

*Ellesmere.* Very amiable of Elizabeth, and well intended, no doubt, but charmingly pedantic : just like her father, one of the most striking characteristics of whose character was, I

believe, pedantry. By lapse of time, of course she meant distraction of attention by other circumstances happening in time; and, as I have been telling Milverton, change is the arch-consoler, and that is why, as we are all rather tired, I vote we go abroad.

*Milverton.* I do not see why change of place is necessary. Would not change of pursuit do? In general we go about here in our walks without sufficiently changing our ideas. If we were to look at Nature more closely, it would be change enough. I have a theory that every plant we see is of some great and peculiar utility, and we have not yet perhaps mastered a hundredth part of the use of plants. Then, if we were to think of the wonders of growth and assimilation,—why it is, that when you put in here a seed, you have a plant which employs itself in secreting poison, and when you put in another seed close to it, you have a plant which concocts human nutriment, and both of them producing these different results always in exactly the same proportions—what a question lies before us, and something so entirely different from our usual cogitations.

*Ellesmere.* Very interesting, not in the least recreative! You have cultivated many things, my dear fellow, but a judicious cultivation of listlessness has been entirely omitted by you. In travel, thoughts and ideas come to you. You do not fatigue yourself by rushing out to find them.

*Milverton.* There is a great deal of annoyance always in travelling.

*Ellesmere.* Granted. But the annoyances are somewhat different from those at home, and change is what we want.

*Milverton.* Then, there are the ladies. There are not many parts of Europe, to my mind, quite fit for English ladies.

*Ellesmere.* Well, we will keep to the most civilised places, to the most beaten tracks; I have never, as yet, half seen any foreign town that I have seen.



*Milverton.* Besides we shall have so many pictures and works of art to see. I am tired of seeing pictures. I have such a number of them in my own mind as yet unpainted, and I am content with these. By the way, did I ever tell you that before I went to Venice, I said jokingly (dreading the pictures I should have to see), that I would only look at six and a half, and that Mr. Ruskin should direct me if he liked? To my astonishment and pleasure I found a letter from Mr. Ruskin at Venice, directing me which six and a half I was to see. I had already, however, been lugged through several galleries. Thenceforward I kept to the six and a half. His choice seemed to me admirable, especially the half picture, which I went three times to see.

*Ellesmere.* An extraordinary event for you. But what do you mean by a half picture.

*Milverton.* Oh! one-half was not worth looking at, and the other was transcendently beautiful. Mr. Ruskin kept to his agreement, and did not delude me into seeing seven pictures instead of six and a half.

*Dunsford.* You were saying that you had a great number of unpainted pictures always in your mind?

*Milverton.* Should you like to have any of them? It is curious, but I have been painting two companion pictures ever since we have been walking about in the garden. One consists of some dilapidated garden architecture, with overgrown foliage of all kinds, not forest foliage, but that of rare trees such as the Sumach and Japan-Cedar, which should have been neglected for thirty years. Here and there, instead of the exquisite parterre, there should be some miserable patches of potatoes and beans, and some squalid clothes hung out to dry. Two ill-dressed children, but of delicate features, should be playing about an ugly neglected pool that had once been the basin to the fountain. But the foliage should be the chief thing, gaunt, grotesque, rare, beautiful, like an unkempt, uncared-for, lovely mountain girl.

Underneath this picture :—"Property in the country, in chancery."

The companion picture, of course, should be :—"Property in town, in chancery." It should consist of two or three hideous, sordid, window-broken, rat-deserted, paintless, blackened houses, that should look as if they had once been too good company for the neighbourhood, and had met with a fall in life, not deplored by any one. At the opposite corner should be a flaunting new gin-palace. I do not know whether I should have the heart to bring any children there, but I would if I could.

*Ellesmere.* Well, your pictures are delightful, certainly, and possess all that serene cheerfulness which is the highest product of Art ; at least they would do so if there was a thriving lawyer's house in the background. But seriously, Milverton, we will not ask you to see a single picture : and if you will come with us and bring Miss Mildred and Miss Blanche, I will go with you and see seven of the chief sewers in seven of the chief towns, and if that is not an inducement to offer to a sanitarian I do not know what is. Is it a bargain ? Do not think to increase the high terms I offer by any chaffering. My terms are Sibylline. Is it a bargain ?

*Milverton.* It is.

I may as well explain more fully here who Mildred Vernon and Blanche Vernon are—the two young ladies who accompanied us on this tour. They are wards of mine, as well as cousins of Milvertons. Since the marriage of my niece, Lucy Daylmer, they have occasionally lived with me, and have sometimes been on a visit to their cousin, but their home has chiefly been with their other guardian, in London. They are orphans. They are both very intelligent girls, but intelligent in

different ways. Mildred resembles her cousin Milverton. She is very well read, indeed has been quite studious for a girl, and is an alert, enthusiastic person, caring much about what goes on in the world. Blanche, on the contrary, cares only for what is near to her, and is a household sort of person. When she was younger, and I occasionally directed her education, she would learn dutifully anything that I gave her to learn ; but it excited no curiosity in her, and she did not care to follow it up. She said her lesson to please me, and there was an end of it. Mildred, on the other hand, was absolutely tiresome to teach, because she would know all about what she was learning, tormenting me with sharp questions, and demanding to have everything explained to her satisfaction. They are both beautiful, at least I think so ; and their beauty corresponds to their characters. There is a touch of imperiousness in Mildred's blue eyes, somewhat added to by her dark eyebrows and eyelashes,—an unusual combination. She has that form of beauty which is often to be seen in all classes at Limerick, and which they are said to derive from Spanish ancestry. In Blanche's countenance all is smooth and rounded, gracious and impressible. It is a trite remark to make, but really Nature does seem to amuse herself sometimes in making members of the same family so widely diverse that they seem to be representatives of different races. And yet, on closer knowledge, you almost always find the family relationship strictly maintained in some points, either of voice, handwriting, gesture, or temperament—in likings

or dislikings. This, too, occurs in cases where the children have been educated widely apart, and have not seen one another for years together. Two brothers, brought up in different hemispheres, will yet write exactly alike, and the gesture of one as he walks down the street, perhaps with his back to you, and almost a stranger, will immediately remind you of the other, whom you have known from childhood. Ah ! what a beautiful thing is relationship, beautiful in its likeness and in its diversities ; but we men do not make of it what we might. That dreadful familiarity, which few people know how to guide and govern, prevents or disfigures so much affection. Still, relationship remains one of the most delightful things in the world. But I must not go on moralising, and must keep such thoughts for my sermons, when my hearers are obliged to listen to me ; whereas, if I go on now in this strain, my readers may very judiciously put down the book. Besides, I am hindering them, as I said before, from better things.

## CHAPTER I.

### WORRY.

“**T**HEY may say what they like against the Rhine : that it is vulgarised, that it is cockneyfied ; that it is not so grand as the Danube or the Rhone ; but, take it altogether, it is the most charming river in Europe to my mind. I do not wonder at the passionate affection which our friends the Germans have for it. There are five or six great cities which I love very much : Milan, Venice, Genoa, Cadiz, Edinburgh (when it is very warm), and Dublin ; but I do not know that I ever have more pleasure than in pottering about these small towns on the Rhine, as we are now doing. Of course it is an additional pleasure to me that there are no picture-galleries or works of art to be seen.”

Thus it was that Milverton began a conversation one day, after an early German dinner, when we had sauntered out upon the terrace of some small town on the Rhine. I forget whether it was Andernach, or Boppard, or some town on the opposite side of the river. Milverton, Ellesmere, and Mr. Midhurst were smoking ; “more usefully employed,” as Ellesmere said, than Blanche or Mildred, who were working at little bits of

embroidery ; “ more harmlessly employed,” so he was pleased to say, than Dunsford, as he was sure that I was meditating an increase to my stock of sermons, and that I was just working in a simile “ quite new,” about the resemblance of the flow of a river to the course of human life. Milverton took up the question of smoking, and the conversation proceeded thus :—

*Milverton.* Ah, what a blessing this smoking is ! perhaps the greatest that we owe to the discovery of America ; and what a pity it is that so good a thing should be so much abused ! You see a young man consuming immense quantities of this potent herb at a time of life when it is peculiarly injurious ; when he needs activity rather than calmness ; and before he has laid in that stock of vexations which are sometimes so judiciously and so wisely regarded amidst the fragrant wreaths of this beneficent weed. Instead of beginning at fourteen, thirty-five would be a much better age to commence smoking.

*Ellesmere.* With what fierce indignation a company of young gentlemen would receive this sentiment of our philosophic friend.

*Milverton.* I suspect it is sound doctrine, nevertheless, though the young gentlemen might not like it.

*Ellesmere.* Well, Milverton, but are you sure that the troubles of life go on increasing ? Do not the young feel what troubles they have with an acuteness unknown to us ? If these pretty pieces of embroidery were to be spoilt now, or the boxes of rubbish which these girls are accumulating as presents to their friends, were to fall overboard from the steamer into the Rhine, would not the anguish of Miss Mildred and Miss Blanche considerably exceed yours and mine when a Bill is lost in Parliament, which you and I care

about, or when some piece of property goes wrong, or when we find our seeming friends become our enemies, while amidst gloom, sickness, and disappointment we discern our powers of protecting ourselves gradually decaying? For my part, instead of limiting smoking, I think I would extend it to women, and perhaps even to the so-called "inferior" animals. How noble our bull-dog Fixer would look with a pipe in his mouth. But give some answer, Milverton, to my question about the troubles of girls and boys. Are they not most acute?

*Milverton.* Yes, they are very acute; but they are simple in their nature. They are not large, varied, perplexed, and cumbered with all the bewildering feelings of nice responsibility. These are the troubles for which there is occasionally great virtue in smoke. The best thing I ever read about smoking was by an anonymous author in *Blackwood*, who said, if I recollect the substance of his remarks, that it seemed to arrest Time for you, and to give you a keen sensation of the present. Now Mr. Lewes has shown, in his admirable essay on "Suicide,"<sup>1</sup> that it is a mistake

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<sup>1</sup> I subjoin an extract from this remarkable paper, which has pleased me much, and I daresay will please others as much:—

"This trite experience of the instability of human happiness has an obverse aspect which should give consolation in moments of affliction. The same uncertainty which attends our forecastings of success and happiness, equally attends our forecastings of failure and misery. The radiance is not more liable to be overclouded than the darkness is to be irradiated. We cannot foresee truly; we can only imagine something that *may* occur; and these imaginations are always wrong, if not as to the event itself, yet as to the degree in which the event will affect us. Let the worst he foresees arrive, it will reach the victim as something very different from what he imagined. The crash arrives; nothing could—nothing did avert it; it is here, and he is a beggar. His wife and children are beggars. Nay, worse than all, he is disgraced: deeds come to light which cause him to blush deeply when revealed, although he blushed but

as to time which has probably led to many a suicide. The imagination of the tormented man presents to him long lines of evil occurrences marching in upon him at the same time. Practically, Mr. Lewes maintains, they do not come in this way. Evil, as well as good, is unpunctual, and often fails in keeping its appointments. But I will read the whole essay to you when we get back to Worth-Ashton, and are once more amidst my dear swine and beloved oxen. You apprehend, however, the gist of the argument. While smoking, you cease for the moment to live wholly in the future, which miserable men do for the most part, to the great increase of their misery.

*Ellesmere.* Then, after all, disappointed affection is not so great a misfortune as it has been accounted. It does not need a cigar, according to our philosopher. This is a

slightly, perhaps in doing them. Everything, then, that he dreaded has arrived? True: but not as he feared it. Now he is face to face with it, the terror vanishes. His strength is greater, and his sorrow less. Bankruptcy, if painful, is found to be endurable. Poverty turns out a comparatively slight evil—considerably less than a toothache. Even the shame against which sensitive pride revolted is not so terrible as imagination pictured it; although, being an intellectual pain, and indefinite in its nature, imagination continues to exercise a control over it. Men do not look their scorn at him as he passes. His wife and children do not shrink from him, but cling with closer fondness, consoling him for the neglect of others. The dog licks his hand as before. The tradesman is as cap-in-hand for custom. The heart still beats, and Heaven is above all. . . . In this simple fact, that we cannot accurately foresee the future, lies a refuge from despair.

‘The Greeks said grandly in their tragic phrase—

“Let no one be called happy till his death,”

To which I add—“Let no one till his death

Be called unhappy.” (*Aurora Leigh*.)

—“Suicide in Life and Literature,” *Westminster Review*, July, 1857.



comfort, Mr. Midhurst, for you and me. Mr. Midhurst was telling me this morning that he had never tasted a canvas-back duck,—at least in good preservation : and he inoculated me with his sorrow and his disappointment to that degree that we have both been very melancholy ever since ; but these disappointed affections are not to be soothed by light and trivial things like a cigar.

It amuses me to see that Milverton makes so light of the miseries of affection, while he is so tender about the woes and worries of middle-aged men of business. Commend me to a philosopher for taking a thoroughly one-sided view of any question.

*Milverton.* Ah, you do not estimate, or you pretend not to estimate, the cares and troubles of the middle-aged ; whereas I must confess that, even in a novel, I often feel more for the mother, who is but a lay-figure, than for the daughter, who, though she goes through sore troubles——

*Ellesmere.* Requiring many cigars in the course of the first, second, and the first half of the third volumes——

*Milverton.* Is yet eventually to blaze out into a successful marriage, while the poor mother——

*Ellesmere.* Is to become a mere mother-in-law.

But stop, Milverton ; if you are so hard-hearted as not to admit the full misery of disappointed affection, at least you will allow that there is one cause of suffering pertaining to the young which is immensely potent in its nature. I mean false shame, a misery which you really seem to have forgotten.

When a young man, or young woman, does or says something in society which is either ill-timed, ill-advised, indiscreet, or simply ridiculous, there is scarcely any estimate which can be made sufficiently great to represent the suffering which the unhappy blunderer will contrive to get out of this small social misadventure.

I am a hardened lawyer now. Blushing is not my forte ;

but I could blush all over, if I chose to recall minutely a little misery of that kind which I brought upon myself some eighteen years ago, from saying, in the innocence and guilelessness of my heart, some particularly indiscreet thing, which for a few minutes startled a whole company into silence.

You talk of smoking not being necessary for the untroubled natures of the young, but if smoking could have done any good to me in that case (which I don't think it could), I would have smoked a barrel of cigars, and should have been content to have been made very ill, in order to have escaped the oppressing recollection of my folly.

Miss Vernon and Miss Blanche know very well—whether they choose to confess it is another thing—that if they have entered a drawing-room with their gowns not quite settled, or any little matter of dress awry about them, they get home thoroughly miserable, cry for some hours before they get to sleep, and believe for a week afterwards that the whole company did nothing else but observe the ill-settled dress, or the awry flimsiness—whatever it was—and that the chief talk of the room was about them.

In the supreme art of self-tormenting there is nothing like the vigorous imagination of a very young person who thinks that he or she has made himself or herself unpleasantly remarkable in good society.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I declare Sir John has made quite an eloquent speech upon false shame, or rather upon exaggerated shame, and all he has said is very true—indeed, when he tells how he could blush now at the mere recollection of this long-past indiscretion, it gives us a fearful notion of the burning power of shame.

*Milverton.* I admit it was an oversight of mine not to have taken into account the sufferings of the young from false shame, and I stand corrected, but am still not disposed to vary the result of my conclusions about the relative sufferings of youth and middle-age.

*Ellesmere.* I make a proposition to this worshipful company—that Milverton be entreated to write an essay upon Worry. His having said that he would write no more essays is an additional reason for his writing it. I never heard Madame Grisi with more delight than the time immediately after “the very last time” that she was to sing. So, no doubt, it will be with Milverton’s first essay after the very last. People will become enamoured of worry, finding it so well written about.

*Milverton* (pretending to talk to himself). Let me see: First section, Law in general: second section, Common law: third, Chancery law: fourth, Lawyers in private life: fifth, Lawyers in Parliament. (Aloud.) Yes, I will write an essay on Worry, and read it here to-morrow at this very hour. But you must not expect it to be very searching or extensive. Besides, everything about us here is so calm and pleasant: my companions are so unlike co-committee men, co-trustees, co-executors, co-vestrymen (excepting of course Ellesmere, who is the arch-vestryman, who objects to everything proposed by everybody) that I shall find it difficult to bring myself into a thoroughly worried state of mind.

*Ellesmere.* Nonsense! Do not all the coxcombs who write about Art say, that serenity is the first requisite? that a man should *have* suffered, and not be suffering at the moment when he produces or describes? Look at Fixer. That dog is exactly in the state of mind for the production of works of Art. For second-rate artists, however,—essayists and the like—whether their minds are serene or clouded, it does not much matter. To-morrow then, I say, to-morrow, looking serenely from this beautiful terrace, after watching some great raft go down the river, we will listen to the woes of busy men, and think with joy that we have still six weeks of our holidays left to us.

On the morrow we came to the terrace, and Milverton read the following essay :—

THE great characteristic of modern life is Worry. If the Pagan religion still prevailed, the new goddess, in whose honour temples would be raised, and to whom statues would be erected in all the capitals of the world, would be the goddess Worry. London would be the chief seat and centre of her sway. A gorgeous statue, painted and enriched after the manner of the ancients (for there is no doubt that they adopted this practice, however barbarous it may seem to us), would be set up to the goddess in the West-end of the town: another at Temple Bar, of less ample dimensions and less elaborate decoration, would receive the devout homage of worshippers who came to attend their lawyers in that quarter of the town: while a statue, on which the cunning sculptor should have impressed the marks of haste, anxiety, and agitation, would be sharply glanced up at, with as much veneration as they could afford to give to it, by the eager men of business in the City.

The goddess Worry, however, would be no local deity, worshipped merely in some great town, like Diana of the Ephesians; but, in the marketplaces of small rural communities, her statue, made somewhat like a vane, and shifting with every turn of the wind, would be regarded with stolid awe by anxious votaries belonging to what is called the farming interest. Familiar too and household would be her worship; and in many a snug

home, where she might be imagined to have little potency, small and ugly images of her would be found as household gods—the Lares and Penates—near to the threshold and ensconced above the glowing hearth.

The poet, always somewhat inclined to fable, speaks of Love as ruling

“ The court, the camp, the grove,  
And men below, and heaven above ;”

but the dominion of Love, as compared with that of Worry, would be found, in the number of subjects, as the Macedonian to the Persian—in extent of territory, as the county of Rutland to the empire of Russia.

Whence comes the power of this great goddess? what are the scourges that she wields? To men of a certain age it is only necessary to mention some dread names which will at once recall to their minds her mighty influence, and make them desirous of propitiating her awful power. Law, repairs, taxation, partnership, executorship, trusteeship, bankruptcy, are some of the names, which, if pronounced before the most innocent and even the most cautious of men, will often act like a spell upon them, bringing a slight shudder through their frames and not a slight gloom over their countenances. If they are blessed with progeny, one has only to mention the words education and furtherance of children, to tame them down a little, in case their spirits should ever be too bounding.

Perhaps, however, it is in minor matters that the power of Worry is pre-eminently conspicuous. When we think of voting, testimonial-giving, attendance at public

dinners, attendance on committees, management of servants, buying and selling, and, last and greatest, correspondence by letter—a trouble which you mow down each day, and each day see a new crop rising up for the scythe—we can form some slight notion of the power of the great goddess Worry.

What contrivances there are in modern life for losing time and adding to worry! Consider the distances in a great capital that have to be traversed upon the most trivial occasions, the various social annoyances that have to be encountered—visits as tiresome to the person visiting as to the person visited—the duties and responsibilities of a witness, a juryman, a creditor, a godfather, a trustee.

Then there is the worry of pleasure, which is often accompanied by all the difficulty, the tiresomeness, and the monotony of business, without any attendant credit or inward satisfaction of mind. See what a tyrant is fashion; and how much every one endures in the way of dress in order to disfigure himself as much as the rest of mankind, and to avoid being hooted by little boys in the streets.

Then consider the worry connected with conjoint action: how, when you are acting with others, you are never certain of being up to time; and how it requires a long and painful experience of the world before you learn to make allowance for the necessary variation in your calculations which results from other men's backwardness, unpunctuality, and even their reasonable

hindrances. There is nothing like certainty in any transaction where you have colleagues. This man, just at the point of time when you relied upon him, is ill ; that man torn by domestic affliction ; a third indifferent to the project which he had hitherto been sanguine about ; a fourth won over to the enemy, while you, assured of his adherence, have been working in other directions and neglecting him. The army is to concentrate upon a certain point at a certain time ; but this marshal has lost his way, and that one has been beaten on the road ; and one is stupid, and another is traitorous, and a third is unlucky : and at last you find, that to have ensured success, you must yourself have been everywhere at the same time. These things happen too in private life ; for the ordinary affairs of man are not very different from war, diplomacy, and government ; and the impartial goddess Worry finds time to attend to private and most obscure persons.

Indeed, it is such persons—commonplace, unromantic people, who are not likely to cut any figure in history—that are mainly thought of in this essay. Pity is sure to be given, and is justly due, to a Charles the Fifth in his old age, lying sick at Innsprück, the clouds of ill-fortune gathering round him from all quarters, and each post bringing intelligence of Duke Maurice's stealthy and treacherous approach :—to the sorry ending of a Columbus, who was to gain so little himself from the discovery of a New World :—to the struggles of a Napoleon during his closing campaign, grasping still at great projects

which he could not hope to realise, and the stern facts coming daily to him, a master of facts, which contradicted all his hopes :—to many a poet like Dante or Camöens, who has to sing what song he may, amidst the most sordid and miserable accompaniments of poverty, exile, imprisonment, and debt. But all our pity must not be given to these high-raised examples of men suffering from the great or small miseries of human life ; and the ordinary citizen, even of a well-settled state, who, with narrow means, increasing taxation, approaching age, failing health, and augmenting cares, goes plodding about his daily work thickly bestrewed with trouble and worry (all the while, perhaps, the thought of a sick child at home being in the background of his mind), may also, like any hero of renown in the midst of his world-wide and world-attracting fortune, be a beautiful object for our sympathy. The suffering, no doubt, is great of the conquered general, reluctantly hurried by his attendants from the field of battle, who thinks with anguish how differently he would play the game if he had to play it over again. But neither is the suffering light of any one of the peasants whose charred and blackened home the conquerors and the conquered press unheeding over.

To return to the worry incident upon conjoint action : if the matter upon which a man is engaged in conjoint action with others be a great matter, something that may be dignified by the name of “a cause,” what an amount of life-long trouble there is to any person sincerely embarking in it ! What an immense number of people



have to be persuaded, silenced, or tired out, before anything good can be done ! How uncertain it is whether such a subject will surge up at the right time ! how the cause becomes encrusted with fools, and bores, and vain men, who hinder its progress far more than the marine creatures that stick to the keels of vessels, hinder theirs : and thus it is that the men, who of all others should, for the highest interests of mankind, be least obstructed by worry of all sorts, are often those who have to endure, and if they would succeed, to bear down the most of it. That delicate German writer, Jean Paul, says somewhere, when magnifying the office of a learned writer, that kings and princes should sit in dutiful humility upon the bench before him : and so, when a notable man comes into the world, resolutely bent on doing some good in it, and giving fair promise of ability to work, the world could scarcely spend its time better than in defending such a man from all the small cares, hindrances, and worries which seem to grow up in greater profusion under his feet than under those of other men, and often make him a victim instead of a defender.

The especial plague of modern life lies in the perpetual acts of decision which it requires, while at the same time the power of decisiveness is enlightened, encumbered, and often deadened, as the generations of men proceed, by more insight, more forethought, and a constant increase of the sense of nice responsibility. The great Von Humboldt went into the cottages of South American Indians, and, amongst an unwrinkled people, could with

difficulty discern who was the father and who was the son, when he saw the family assembled together. These comfortable Indians took misfortune when it came without regret, without much looking back, without much looking forward ; bearing it with the exemplary patience of a dumb animal. It would, perhaps, be not too much to say, that a man living in a highly-civilised community, makes, at some expense of thought and suffering (if indeed we can dissociate the two things, for steady thought is a kind of suffering) four hundred decisions whilst the savage makes one.

No sane man is likely to talk now as Rousseau did, and to magnify beyond measure the blessings of a savage life ; but it may be well occasionally to pause in the midst of counting our gains from civilisation, and, looking at the other side, to see in what directions worry invades and torments us most successfully—also to study how she may best be resisted. This last investigation may be resolved into two branches : the art of abridging needless annoyance, and the art of taking things coolly.

How much might be done, for instance, in studying taxation with reference to the abridgement of needless annoyance ; yet how rarely we find that statesmen enter with any heartiness into financial discussions, except with regard to the amounts to be raised—in short, how little they seem to care about the worry endured by the tax-paying subject.



In physical matters, too, such as the building of houses, how much might be done to avoid worry. Fire insurance is a great field for the influence of our goddess; yet by a little skill and resolve we might baffle her completely there.

But, perhaps, the field where she might be encountered with most chance of success would be that of social intercourse amongst men. A late prime minister, who was not in the habit of confiding much, once confessed to a foreign ambassador that social claims weighed heavily upon him as a minister: *i.e.* that the necessity for being ever before the public which seems to lie upon an English minister was an afflicting burden to him,—as indeed it must be to every man who wishes to do good and lasting work. Now this demand upon a statesman, and others like to it, show a sad want of consideration on the part of the public. All men of eminence in any department suffer greatly from demands upon their time and attention, which may be very natural on the part of the people making them, but at the same time very unreasonably and substantially unkind; and a wise man who cared for himself alone, if such a man there be, would almost as soon part with obscurity as with life itself, so deadly a thing in a large and civilised community is the possession, often wildly coveted, of any kind of notoriety.

The late Duke of Wellington is reported to have said that he answered every letter addressed to him. I have sometimes thought that that very great man did something to diminish his claim to public gratitude if he ever

made such a remark. A great many letters are so intrusive in their nature that they deserve to be neglected. If a man, whose time is valuable, does answer readily to every foolish claim upon his attention, the important things which he could do well and where his energy is most needed, run some chance of being put aside. And often the neglect of these important things is less visible than any breach or intermission of mere routine work, such as the answering of common letters. The best kind of work often makes least show.

It were well that some skilful essayist should write a short treatise on the art of taking things coolly. Look at the labour that men give even to their sports, with their game-books, and their skilful apparatus, and their fox-covers, and their preserves. That form of pleasure has altogether entered into the domain of tiresome business. And now to moralise upon ourselves. What an elaborate worry we travellers almost always make of travelling: how resolved we are to see more than can possibly be seen with profit or comfort: how much too large and comprehensive our plans are: how seldom we let ourselves be carried away by any real, present enjoyment; and how we have ever ringing in our ears the names of great cities and remarkable mountains, the limits of our journeys, which we are resolved to compass the sight of, let the trouble or worry be ever so great. Then we are resolved to "do," as we say, these towns so thoroughly that we scamper about them like wild

animals with something attached to their tails, and at the end we have a jumble in our memory of all the things we have seen; whereas the profit of a journey is to have a very clear recollection of what you do recollect at all, so that in troubled moments and in the midst of a busy life, sitting by a sea-coal fire and glancing into the "long unlovely London street," some bright and perfect view of Venice, of Genoa, or of Monte Rosa comes back to you, and is as full of repose as a day wisely spent in travel. On a journey, so far from being anxious to exhaust everything at once, and so to mix in your memory the most heterogeneous elements, you should always think that you will come again that way, and take up all the stitches that have fallen through this time. Sincerity and coolness are the two requisites for enjoying a journey: sincerity, to prevent you from worrying yourself by looking at things which you do not really care about, and which you will only have to talk about in future (why should you care to talk about them?), and coolness, that you may have your wits, and your soul, and your powers of observation at liberty to disport themselves. You have mostly come away from business. Why take up a new trade—the irksome trade of travel?

But the grand source of worry, compared with which perhaps all others are trivial, lies in the complexity of human affairs, especially in such an era of civilisation as our own. I was much surprised to find a complaint of this complexity in an author like Goethe, whom I

should have expected to find on the other side. He says :—

“The natives of old Europe are all badly off. Our affairs are by far too artificial and complicated ; our diet and mode of life want nature, and our social intercourse is without love and benevolence. Every one is smooth and polite, but no one is bold enough to be candid and true, and an honest man, a man of natural learning and sentiments, is in a very awkward position. It makes one wish to be born in the South Sea Islands, as a so-called savage, if it were only to get a pure and unadulterated enjoyment of human life.”

Look at the niceties of law, with which all men are presumed to be acquainted, but of which no private person knows anything, until he finds that he, or his partners, or his predecessors, have committed, or omitted, some trivial thing, which may, however, be fatal to his fortunes. Look at the tenure of land, which is often such as to ensure worry even to the most careful person. The largest city in the world is mainly built on leasehold land,—which mode of tenure an eminent person of the present day maintains to be a sufficient cause in itself for the bad building of that city. Thence come all manner of contracts with respect to sub-letting, and with respect to fire-insurance, and all manner of restrictions which hinder usefulness, prevent improvement, and create worry in abundance.

I have not hitherto alluded to the vexation and worry occasioned by the confusion which prevails in law-making,

especially in a free country. If those could be consulted on whom the law is to act, many grievances and vexations might be avoided. As it is, a new law, generally completed in a hurry, and being the subject of innumerable compromises, is a thoroughly tentative process, and probably requires amendment before it has begun to work.

If we turn to that great branch of parliamentary law which comes under the head of Private Bills, we shall find that matters are still worse in this direction. In fact, you have only to mention the words "Private Bill" to any person who has had experience in such transactions, and even if he be of a very placid nature, the chances are that he will break out into a passion, and narrate to you grievances so intolerable that he imagines he is the only unlucky person who has endured them.

We have already touched upon the miseries and worries of conjoint enterprise. Well, indeed, might Sixtus the Fifth exclaim,—“He that has partners has masters!” and he might have added, “he that has subordinates has torments.” Hardly anybody knows how to obey. Indeed, it requires a very clever man, and a scrupulous one, to be obedient. All persons who have been in command will tell you of the sufferings they have endured from subordinates thinking for themselves, as they say, and acting for themselves, on occasions when supreme obedience is necessary. Men in command have no time to explain; and this law holds good from great

generals down to masters of one or two servants. The Duke of Wellington issues orders that certain divisions of the Peninsular army are to move in a certain direction, by a road not the shortest, and not apparently the best. Before dawn he is on the road. The troops do not come. The Duke, rightly conjecturing what had happened, gallops off to the other route, and surprises these divisions by his presence at a point where it was impossible to pass, but at which, knowing how likely men are to disobey orders, he expects, and fears to find them.<sup>1</sup>

Such being the difficulties of acting with others, whether as equals or subordinates, it might have been expected that none but shrewd and strong men would have the courage to embark in adventures over which they are likely to have so loose and wavering a hold. But, strange to say, the persons, generally speaking, who are most attracted by the apparent benefits to be derived from conjoint enterprises, are the least fitted to embark in such undertakings, requiring as they do, a bustling tiresomeness, a questioning activity, and considerable knowledge of affairs to begin with. From the absence, however, of these qualities in many of those persons who have embarked in great enterprises, it comes that, borne by steam, we travel over railroad lines laid, if I may so express it, in the ruin of unnumbered families. We cannot wonder that Charles Lamb should speak of the "sweet simplicity of the three per cents;" yet it would be ruinous to a nation if everybody studied this simplicity

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<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Napier, *War in the Peninsula*, iv. p. 385.



in the arrangement of his fortune ; and as a large majority of men would almost rather be ruined than be inactive or non-enterprising, all one can do in warning men against the miseries and worries incident to conjoint action, is just to suggest to them whether they are the fit persons to enter upon such undertakings.

Then come the worries, not by any means unnoticed in this age, inflicted by routine. Now routine is not to be despised. If you were ever to see a business which demands a considerable amount of routine attempted to be carried on by too little routine, or by none, you would almost be surprised at the magnitude of the evils that arise from this neglect. Yet if carried beyond bounds, and routine seldom knows where to stop, what a fertile source of worry it becomes.

Worry is so extensive a subject that you might descant upon it from early morn to lingering eve of the longest day of the year, and yet leave many of the fields of its operation unploughed and in fallow. I might have spoken, for instance, of the worry of education—not as regards one's self alone, but as regards the education of those about one, and under one, whose welfare must be attended to. In these days, when little is to go by favour, and much by proficiency, this form of worry is terribly increased. It is sometimes forgotten that each generation has somehow or other to teach the next. There may be more skilful elementary works than there used to be, but this gain is more than counterbalanced by the increased

quantity of knowledge that is now demanded of every one ; and babies do not come into the world a bit wiser or more learned than they used to come.

Again, I might have touched upon the worry connected with charity, which once was a simple matter, or at least seemed to be so, but now is encumbered with all manner of questions relating to political economy, and has to deal with such a complex state of affairs that the most benevolent men are perfectly bewildered, not only as to what to give, but whether to give at all, and how to give.

Finally, I might have commented at length, and with painful details, upon the worry of keeping up appearances, upon the worry of governing servants, upon the worry of maintaining a household, upon the worry of buying and selling ; but I forbear. Enough has been said, or at least suggested, with reference to social, domestic, political, educational, legal, financial, military, and politico-economical worries, to indicate the extent and influence of the great goddess, whose powers I began this essay by enlarging upon, and to show that her empire is larger than the Assyrian, the Median, the Roman, the Gallic, or the Anglian,—that, in fact, she not only rules over a territory on which the sun never sets, but even that the dark hours of the night are peopled by her myrmidons, and that men's dreams are by no means freed from her overpowering and oppressive sway.

*Ellesmere.* Catch me asking again for any more essays ! You have brought back all the nuisances of life so vividly that you have made me quite uncomfortable. Our six weeks will soon be over, and we shall be in the thick of all this trouble again. But your remedies, my man, your remedies ! True art should always be healing and restorative. I think nothing of the man who only makes one uncomfortable. I hate tragedies, and the people who write them.

*Milverton.* Great sorrows absorb all minor evils.

*Ellesmere.* Is that meant for comfort ?

*Milverton.* Yes. Let a man think, when he is immersed in all manner of vexations, what it would be to have a real sorrow ; and all that has been vexing him will seem for the moment trivial.

*Dunsford.* These high thoughts are the true consolations.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, yes, my dear Dunsford, of course we know all these things, and they are very proper for you to say ; but the ingenious Milverton is sure to have twenty or thirty odd, out-of-the-way modes of consolation : “ Lights, easements, watercourses, privileges,” as we lawyers say in a lease.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The multiplicity of annoyances in life—each pulling in a different direction from the others, and demanding a man’s attention—keep the mind in equilibrium, and leave the man his sanity.

*Ellesmere.* A great comfort, no doubt !

*Mr. Midhurst.* I have found it so.

*Ellesmere.* No turtle ! no Perigord pie ! The salmon spoilt on the journey ! The canvas-back duck utterly ruined by the voyage ! Washy melted butter ! Ludicrous bread-sauce, made by a country cook !—Mr. Midhurst’s mind preserves its equilibrium, and Mr. Midhurst eats bread and cheese thankfully. Yes, I understand that. The failure of the salmon alone would have been a calamity too great to

be borne. But what says Milverton? Where are his consolations.

*Milverton.* Very few people fully appreciate the fun of civilised life. It is an immense compensation for the other evils. There is ludicrous mismanagement in some department of human affairs: it comes to light: while instantly there are bustle and discussion; wit, humour, sophistry, and wisdom are all brought to bear upon the peccant part. Gradually some improvement is made; and, meanwhile, mankind have had a great deal of amusement and instruction out of the affair.

*Ellesmere.* True: but I should like to hear now, how some part of this needless worry is to be prevented.

*Milverton.* One great remedy would be in a better direction of man's work. It is astonishing how much lost labour there is in the world. This would be an important subject to follow out. I might have some difficulty in showing the close connection that there is between misplaced labour and the vexations of mankind; but there is such a connection.

*Ellesmere.* Instances! instances! Give us hosts of instances. The first that come to hand.

*Milverton.* Well, I will tell you the very last thing that struck me of this kind. As we passed through London I happened to notice a great many stonemasons at work: and what do you think they were doing? What I am going to say is almost incredible, and yet the fact is very common. They were resolutely chipping holes in the stones, in order that they might look like rough stones brought from the quarries without having been worked there. In some great building somewhere or other—

*Mr. Midhurst.* The Pitti palace at Florence.

*Milverton.* Such stones have been put into the lower parts of the building, and consequently it had been thought good sense and good taste to do the same thing in London, the unfittest place in the world for such ornamentation

These holes soon become receptacles of dirt, and add to the general squalidity. Now such foolish expenditure as this is at the bottom of a great deal of bankruptcy, though it may not figure openly in the bankrupt's accounts. Thus folly is quietly developed into the higher stage of being called Worry. But come here, Ellesmere: you ask for instances. Turn round, with your back to the company. (Ellesmere did as he was bid.) Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Sir John Ellesmere, a great lawyer, who is writing a treatise on contingent remainders, and who has a good reason for everything he says and does—and wears. May I ask, Sir John, whether you have ever made use of these four buttons at the back of your coat? Indeed, lives there a man who has made use of them?

*Ellesmere.* (taking his seat again). Oh, this is too absurd.

*Milverton.* No; it is not. I once asked a man who delights in statistics, how many of these needless buttons he thought had been made? I told him I really wanted some rough kind of estimate. He thought I was going to enter deeply into the mysteries of the button-trade, and probably foresaw some motion in Parliament in which his calculations would come out with credit. In a few days he brought his calculation. It considerably exceeded 300 millions.—I forget the odd figures in which such calculators delight.

*Ellesmere.* Upon my word it isn't so absurd. Besides there is the covering and the stitching and the sewing—am I not using the right words, Miss Mildred? But Milverton, while you were about it, why did not you and your detestable statistical man honour the female sex with some of your attention? Why, even Miss Blanche and Miss Mildred are covered all over with needlessness, and each one of them has wasted more in good material than the 300 million buttons, for the use of which the male sex cannot perfectly account.

*Blanche.* Ah, but all we do in the way of dress makes

more beauty in the world, whereas you men only make yourselves more absurd when you are in full dress.

*Milverton.* Then, what a subject furniture is when we are commenting on the useless. I suppose it often happens that at least a quarter of the work in any well-furnished room is useless and delusive—carefully finished knobs to unreal drawers, sham pillars, sham cornices, sham bell-pulls, sham book-cases, in a word, scores of shams.

*Ellesmere.* Now, Milverton, go into large matters. Do not tell us things which Pugin and Ruskin and Scott and many others have been telling us for some time.

*Milverton.* Will you have something political which creates expense and worry, and which is at the same time not only useless, but very mischievous?

*Ellesmere.* Yes.

*Milverton.* The practice of members vacating their seats upon receiving certain government offices. Can you invent a better device for narrowing the Prime Minister in his choice of men to fill great offices—for bringing unnecessary expense and worry upon men at the precise point of time when all their energies are wanted in the difficult commencement of administration,—and for embarrassing government with pledges at the very moment when it ought to be least fettered? You may be the fittest man to be Attorney-General, but being a tiresomely honest individual, you are just the person to be rather shaky—if I may use the term—with your constituency, and liable to be defeated upon some crotchet of theirs which less scrupulous men would easily overcome.

*Ellesmere.* It is, it certainly is, a silly practice, and should be done away with as soon as possible, as a thing distinctly hindering the service of the state.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I would go much farther in the same direction, and am prepared to maintain that the greatest reform in parliament would be, the giving officials seats in

either house to certain officers of government. These need not exceed ten or fifteen in number. There is not the slightest danger of their bringing too much power to the Crown; and the wide range that they would give the Premier in choosing associates and subordinates would double his power of effective administration.

*Dunsford.* This is a plan, Mr. Midhurst, which Milverton has always urged upon us whenever we have been talking over these subjects. I am a Whig Parson, and have always looked up to Sydney Smith as a model of political thinking for a clergyman, but I cannot discern the least danger to the constitution in this proposed reform. If I did, I would oppose it, however much it might aid official men, and further good administration.

*Ellesmere.* Bravely spoken, my dear old tutor; it is very clear to me though that you will never be a bishop nor even wear the lesser apron of a dean. You must not speak out your sentiments so distinctly as you do. You do not give me the idea of being a safe man. A man to rise in the world should always be hazy in the expression of his opinions.

*Dunsford.* I do not want to rise in the world, Sir John; and if I did want to rise in the world, I would not suppress my opinions, or endeavour to express them hazily, for all the bishoprics that ever were created.

*Ellesmere.* I call that rampant virtue; but I know it is throwing pearls before unclean animals to scatter worldly wisdom in the way of Dunsford. So now to other matters. Give us some more instances, Milverton, of worry and waste. Feed me with facts. I dote upon facts.

*Milverton.* Take the whole question of adulteration—

*Ellesmere.* I won't stand this. I've heard enough of sanitary reform and seen so little done in it, that I decline to stay here while Milverton exhausts seven blue-books, and succeeds in proving that some men are scoundrels, while

others are fools and *fainéants*, and that the great mass of the public are gulled, and swindled, and poisoned to an almost unlimited extent. No, I will not.

*Milverton.* Now do sit down, Ellesmere, and listen for a few moments. I will really put the thing in a new light. You may remember, that in the course of the essay I put "buying and selling" as two of the fertile causes of worry. Now consider, what a serious thing it is that in any civilised community you have the greatest difficulty in buying the thing you want; that you are obliged to spend time, take great precautions, and make careful arrangements, if you wish to purchase any simple commodity; that there should be persons whose business it is with great skill to baffle and delude you when you are endeavouring to make this purchase. I put aside for the moment all question of humanity or inhumanity, and bring the matter under the head of needless worry. You are ordered to procure such a drug, or such an oil, or such a condiment, for your sick child. By hard work you have got the money. That is the first step in the process, and an important one; but after that is settled, you will find it quite an occupation to get the pure drug, and the right oil, and the unadulterated condiment.

*Dunsford.* Now don't talk in this cold, business-like way. I do say that of all the iniquities on the face of the earth the most cruel and irredeemable is the sale of adulterated food to the poor. Here comes a poor labouring man. He has just done a hard stroke of work. He wants to slake his thirst, and you give him some confounded——

*Ellesmere.* Don't swear, my reverend friend.

*Dunsford.* You give him some detestable concoction pretending to be the thing he asks for, and it not only does not support his strength, but it does not assuage his thirst. Indeed, it is so made as to increase thirst. He comes again and again for the vile draught. The poor fellow gets drunk, beats his wife, perhaps, and I am sent for the next day to



lecture him. I declare I am ashamed to do it sometimes, when I think how deeply guilty men of our own class and station are in this matter. The mischief is preventable. At any rate it might be greatly modified—so you official people tell me—Why don't you do it?

*Ellesmere.* Three cheers for our reverend demagogue! He is worthy of a triple apron. By Jove, if I become Lord Chancellor, you shall have all my livings (at least in succession), and shall go from living to living, preaching at each place a fiery sermon against the adulteration of beer.

*Milverton.* The magnitude of the evil is yet unknown to the public. A little time ago I went to see one of the great surgeons at the East end of the town—one of the principal surgeons of a large hospital. After we had finished the business I came about, we began to discuss sanitary matters which he seemed more eager to enter upon than I was, and he said to me:—"Half the cases that are brought to me are caused by the adulteration of food." What is the good of legislation, if it cannot reach such an evil as this?

*Ellesmere.* Ah, how true are the words of *Ecclesiasticus*; "As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of the stones, so doth sin stick close between buying and selling."

*Mr. Midhurst.* Not one of you seems to have touched upon the higher branches of worry—worry on a great scale—national worry. Look at the fate of England. If ever there was a people that would be content to be quiet it is the English; and see how we have been dragged over the continent by Plantagenets and Tudors and Stuarts, throwing away our money by sackfuls; and now, at this advanced era, in the world, we are still any day at the mercy of the most foolish of continental mankind. At any moment the proceedings of some small stupid despot, or wild democratic fanatic, many plunge us into a European war. When incendiary fires were frequent in England, it was often found that some idiot, or some stupid boy, was the wilful cause of

it ; and so it often is with greater conflagrations. Our own people, if not eager to begin the fray, are very unwilling to close it ; and of course, ultimately, it has to be paid for by every kind of privation and misery. Neither does one see any clear remedy. We occupy a certain position in the world, and have the cares, the anxieties, the expenses, and the responsibilities belonging to such a position.

*Milverton.* A more saddening reflection to me is, the increasing influence and wider spread of commercial and financial misfortunes, and to observe how quiet, innocent, obscure persons, keeping to their own work in their own department, and who understand nothing about the rate of exchange, are quietly overwhelmed by some over-speculation in a distant part of the world, of which they scarcely know the name, and certainly know nothing about the geography. We are all so intertwined together now, that the same wave—I am speaking of financial and commercial waves—beats upon every shore, making wrecks everywhere ; even of those who seldom venture far from land.

*Ellesmere.* Now you have passed from worry to disaster. The only persons who are trained to keep to the subject they are discussing, are lawyers, and they do keep to it ; whereas even clergymen occasionally wander from the text ; and as for authors—why Milverton would begin a paper on Bank stock, and end with a discussion on the Pelagian heresy ; and if you were to follow him throughout, the reasoning would be pretty close, and the connection between the two subjects self-evident—at least to his mind.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Well, I will keep to the subject closely in the next remark I make, which is one of approbation ; for I maintain, you are quite right, Milverton, in commenting severely upon the needless worry connected with taxation. I am sure that species of nuisance might be smoothed a little. The Assessed Taxes are a mine of worry.

*Milverton.* Yes : they are ; but my especial aversion is

the Income Tax, chiefly on account of the trouble it gives, the temptation it offers to the unscrupulous, and the torment that it is to the scrupulous. I suspect that men highly-placed little know the trouble and vexation it is to men not so highly placed to describe and estimate their incomes, and still more what a trouble it is for lone women and ignorant persons to do so. As belonging to the former class, take men of letters for instance and poor professional men. Consider the bit and scrap way in which they get their money ; a guinea here, five guineas there, and so on ; and how, of necessity, irregular all these transactions must be. They have no person to keep their accounts for them ; and though of course the keeping of accounts is a most desirable thing, it seems hard that a government should force it on men who can do without it.

But I confess I hate all compulsory returns. I see that there are many, excellent people, statistically minded, who are bent upon getting farmers to make returns with respect to the land under cultivation. I hope with all my heart the farmers will steadily resist. If these statistical people want the information, let them get it for themselves. All information is purchasable. If the managers of the *Times* wanted the information, and chose to go to the expense of getting it, of course they would get it. I wonder, by the way, whether any of these statistical people have ever managed land themselves ; whether they have ever entered into the difficulties of keeping farm accounts. Those who have, and who know what a labour both for mind and body the work of a good farmer is, will be slow to put upon him any additional burden or botheration.

But I object to the thing on general principles. The world is plagued enough with the returns that it has already to make, and as far as I can, I will resist its having any more to make. As it is, too, we seldom know enough about the returns that we must deal with, and are often

scarcely aware of what we are paying in rates and taxes when the claims for payment come in to us. It has been well said by somebody, that an Englishman will pay, or endeavour to pay, any demand made by any person in the guise of a tax-gatherer, bringing any scrap of any paper having an official look about it.

*Mr. Midhurst.* What you were saying, Milverton, about the intrusions which men of any eminence have to endure, put me in mind of an Eastern friend of mine. He was one of the foremost men in the town where he lived. His name was Ali Ben Hassan. I carried out letters of introduction to him from England; and, as I came to towns which were not far from his, many persons pressed upon me other missives of recommendation, all addressed to Ali Ben Hassan, "the Much-beloved." I was curious to see this Ali Ben Hassan, "the Much-beloved;" and before going to any one else, went to him. He received me very courteously, but there was an unmistakable air of weariness about the man, which, when I came to know him better, was easily accounted for. Ali took a fancy to me (perhaps it was because I could speak so little to him), and I sat often with him on his *musnud*. I noticed that whenever we were about to enjoy ourselves, and when his Nubian slave had handed the amber mouth-piece of his master's *chibouk* to him, poor Ali was not suffered to take many fragrant whiffs before some kinsman, or some neighbour, or some stranger came to demand aid, advice, or interference on the part of Ali Ben Hassan, "the Much-beloved." None of the applicants were shame-faced. Why was he called "the Much-beloved," if it was not his duty to assist all comers? Ali Ben Hassan seemed to think so too. No word of complaint ever fell from his grave lips as he pensively laid down the amber mouth-piece; and when he resumed it again, it was with the air of a man whose destiny it was never to enjoy any pleasure long.

At last the plague approached that town. I learnt of the impending calamity from the ominous whispers and frightened faces of my friends. Ali Ben Hassan also mentioned the fact; but not in a whisper, and certainly without the slightest sign of alarm: indeed, I almost fancied that I could trace a certain sort of satisfaction in his countenance when he communicated the intelligence to me.

The plague came: the plague raged. Almost every man avoided his fellow-man as if he were a lion. Ali Ben Hassan and I smoked our *chibouks* in silence, for the most part uninterrupted. One day I said to him:—"Ali Ben Hassan, how is it that thou art different from other men? Why is it that thou dost not fear the plague? Would not his townsmen miss the 'Much-beloved,' if the Angel of Death were to come into this abode, where the threshold is worn down by the footsteps of those who seek the generous man for his bounty, the wise man for his advice, the gracious man for his consolation?"

Ali Ben Hassan smiled a sad smile. "Listen," he said, "to the story of Ali Ben Hassan, 'Much-beloved,' and the very wearied.

"Allah made me of a tender and pitiful heart; Allah made me a pleasant companion; and from my boyhood upwards, all men have said to themselves: 'I am weary, I am sad, I am in trouble, I will go and see Ali Ben Hassan: mayhap he will comfort me.' The chief men of the city bid me to their feasts: the poor men also rely upon me as a guest. Even my wives do not become tired of my company. My kinsfolk, my friends, my acquaintances, and even the passers-by say:—"Let us go and talk with Ali Ben Hassan;" and each blames me because I am not always with him and uniformly intent upon his affairs; for am I not the 'Much-beloved,' and do I not belong wholly to every one?

"There came a flight of quails from the desert. They

darkened the air. Almost every one's house in the city was stored with these savoury birds. Men ran with gifts of them even to Noorsha Beg, my savage neighbour, who never said a good word, nor did a kind deed, for anybody. Ali Ben Hassan, 'the Much-beloved,' had no quails brought to him, though all his neighbours came to consult him as to what they should do with their abundance—but who cares to gratify 'the Much-beloved?' He must be content with a name. This neglect of my townsmen I care not for; but I would fain have some time to work for mine own necessities, and to think mine own thoughts. The favour which I have found with men is a burden to me, and yet I could not now bear to be without it. Thou wilt soon depart, O yellow-haired stranger from the West, and wilt return to thine own land. Let the seeds of wisdom fall upon a soil which the fruitgiving river has lately flowed over. Be not too much beloved, and live in peace. Thou seest this plague: it is a sore grief to me, for the men of the city fall fast; but it gives me my only time of rest. Behold, have we not smoked out our *chibouks*, and the curtain has not been lifted aside! Go now; may Allah be with thee, and mayst thou never have a name greater than thou canst bear."

There were tears in the words of Ali Ben Hassan, for his voice was marvellously sweet and soft. And I journeyed on my way, and saw his face no more.

*Ellesmere.* Poor Ali Ben Hassan! I can well imagine how tenderly Mr. Midhurst sympathised with him—especially about the quails. I am happily not very famous yet, and certainly shall never be known as "John Ellesmere Ben Ellesmere, the Much-beloved;" but I can perceive what worry must attend upon overmuch popularity.

*Blanche.* What a delightful thing it is, that children, at least, escape this worry you have all been talking so eloquently about.

*Milverton.* Yes : I have never been more struck with that that when observing a family in the middle class of life going to the sea-side. There is the anxious mother wondering how they shall manage to stow away all the children when they get down. Visions of damp sheets oppress her. The cares of packing sit upon her soul. Doubts of what will become of the house when it is left are a constant drawback from her thoughts of enjoyment ; and she confides to the partner of her cares how willingly, if it were not for the dear children, she would stay at home. He, poor man, has not an easy time of it. He is meditating over the expense, and how it shall be provided for. He knows, if he has any knowledge of the world, that the said expense will somehow or other exceed any estimate he and his wife have made of it. He is studying the route of the journey, and is perplexed by the various modes of going. This one would be less expensive, but would take more time. And then time always turns into expense on a journey. In a word, the old birds are as full of care and trouble as a hen with ducklings ; but the young birds ! Some of them have never seen the sea before, and visions of unspeakable delight fill their souls—visions that will almost be fulfilled. The journey, and the cramped accommodation, and the packing, and the everything out of place, are matters of pure fun and anticipated joy to them.

*Ellesmere.* Quite right, quite right. Let us enjoy life while we can. I too am a boy, and look ! there is the other boy Walter down by the river, making ducks and drakes with stones—which is really a delightful occupation. You have all the pleasure of feeling like a spendthrift without being one. I'll go and cut him out, and you may all go on talking about worry till you become as mournful as a very rich man who has made a questionable investment.

So saying, Ellesmere rushed off to the water's edge : we followed more leisurely ; and so our conversation was broken up for that day.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> What a comment upon Milverton's remarks with respect to intrusive letter-writing is furnished by the following notification, recently put forth by the great Humboldt :—" Overwhelmed by the number of letters sent me, which are increasing every day, amounting from 1600 to 2000 per annum—many, too, being on the most futile subjects, such as demands for my autograph, and offers to cure me of all diseases—I once more make a public appeal to the persons who wish me well, and request them not to occupy themselves so much with what concerns me, in order that, with the diminution of strength, physical and intellectual, which I experience, I may be allowed a little leisure for study and composition. I trust that this step, to which I have recourse with reluctance, will not be interpreted unkindly."—*Note addressed by Baron de Humboldt to the Berlin Journals.*



## CHAPTER II.

## WAR.

WE were staying at the picturesque little town of Namur for a few days.<sup>1</sup> Often we strayed up the grassy heights of those fortifications which have seen so much warfare, and which so pleasantly recall King William the Third and my Uncle Toby. The conversation naturally took a military turn. Milverton deplored the increase of barracks, armies, camps; in which lamentation I ventured to coincide thoroughly with him. Mr. Midhurst, as a diplomatist, was rather inclined to discuss the political state of Europe, and to show, if not the just reasons, the causes of this increase of military expenditure, Ellesmere flitted from side to side in the argument; and, as his way is, tried to embroil it more and more. Entering into details, Milverton gave us an estimate of the expenses of the Russian war, which he said, speaking from authority, exceeded 70 millions of pounds.<sup>2</sup> He

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<sup>1</sup> I see I have made a mistake in the arrangement of these conversations at the very outset, for we certainly were at Namur before we came to the Rhine; but I did not promise to be precise upon these points.—D.

<sup>2</sup> It has recently been ascertained, from official sources, that the expenditure for the Russian war, including the Sardinian loan, may be set down as £70,849,859.

then proceeded to the evil effects of the increase in taxation thus caused, and the extent to which it affected the comfort and well-being of individuals in the different classes of the state. I remember that he accounted for the largeness of expense in the Russian war as occasioned, according to the opinion of an eminent statesman and financier, by the suddenness of the war. At last, after some discussion, Ellesmere thus expressed himself:—

*Ellesmere.* Do not let us have any of this desultory talk; I see you care about this subject, Milverton. Let us have an essay from you on it. An essay on any subject is 'not worth much in itself—is likely indeed to be rather a nuisance; but it gives room for good discussion. It affords extended lines for attack and defence (you see I am quite military in my metaphors); and it may give some method to our talk upon the subject.

*Milverton.* No, no! No more essays, if you please, from me. I sometimes wish I had never written a single essay. They are such dogmatic things, at any rate in appearance; and as I grow older I hate dogmatising more and more. Besides, if you comment upon errors, most people are apt to think that you are free from them yourself, or that you fancy you are, whereas you seldom write tolerably about anything that you have not suffered from; and the essays of virtuous and good men, like the histories of happy countries, would be pre-eminently stupid. Now, in the very case before us, I should have to talk down war, and to be very wise about it; but when an occasion for war arises, I am just as likely to be enthusiastic as any of my fellow-countrymen, and just as likely to be led away by a popular cry. Then one writes about the matter, and seems so wise and forbearing; being conscious all the time that it is but seeming.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, I know that you would get up at five o'clock in the morning to see the Guards commence their march, and would cheer them as vociferously as any one of the rest of the mob. But still let us appeal from Philip after dinner to Philip before dinner the next day, and let us have an essay on War; only do not begin at the beginning, and give us long quotations from Thomas Aquinas to prove that war is in some cases justifiable. We will take that for granted. There is always war, justifiable war, between me and Walter: also between Fixer and all other dogs of his size and courage.

As to what you have said about dogmatising, I hold that to be frivolous. Large, fluent, unquestioning, unhesitating, unscrupulous dogmatism is one of the grand elements of success in modern life; as it was in the early days of Greek philosophy, when a philosopher had only to assert, "Fire is the principle of the universe," or, "All is water," or, "Nature abhors a vacuum," or, "Bodies descend because they have a tendency that way,"—and instantly, after uttering any of these bold sayings, crowds of scholars sought the wise man's door; cities contended for the honour of being his birth-place; submissive crowds made way before him; and in short, to use modern parlance, he "kept his carriage" on a dogma. If you have doubts upon anything that you talk about, you will not even keep a gig.

*Dunsford.* Now that is what astonishes me—namely, that so many dogmas and dogmatisers having been found out in the course of ages, people should go on dogmatising just the same, in art, in science, in literature, and in life.

*Ellesmere.* Allow me to say, sir, as Dr. Johnson would have said, that your last remark shows you to be equally ignorant of men and things. What is the use of philosophers, critics, and prominent persons of all kinds, but to pronounce distinct opinions on all subjects human and divine, and to save the rest of us the trouble of thinking? In my

essay on success in life I shall show that self-assertion<sup>r</sup> is excellent—but all assertion is good. Let us hear no more against dogmatising. Do not deprive men rashly of one of their chief comforts in life.

But now about this essay that we are to have.

*Milverton.* You will not have an essay, but since you are so pertinacious, you shall have a solemn talk upon the subject. I will think over what I have to say, make a few notes, and coming to this spot to-morrow, at this hour I will talk out to you all that I have thought upon the matter.

*Ellesmere.* Talk is not so good as writing. If I upset you upon any particular point, you will exclaim, "That is not exactly what I said, or at least what I meant to say," and there will arise a mist of parliamentary explanation, and the force of my arguments will be lost in the mist. But I suppose I must be contented with what I can get, and so we will have this solemn palaver to-morrow.

We did come on the ensuing afternoon, and Milverton commenced his talk in the following manner :—

IT is now eighteen centuries and a half since a new religion was preached to mankind—a religion full of peace and gentleness and mercy. On the day when the Founder of that religion was born, the peace of Europe was maintained by about three hundred thousand soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Milverton seems to have underrated the Roman forces. I have consulted with my learned friend Mr. W. B. Donne, who gives me the following as his calculation of the state of the military establishment A.D. I.

1. Legionaries. Augustus fixed the number of legions at 25. Of each legion the full complement was—

There are now<sup>1</sup> about two millions and a half on the peace establishment. Picture to yourself what these two

Foot . . . . .	6,100	
Horse . . . . .	726	
	<u>25 + 6,826 =</u>	170,650
To this sum add a nearly equal number of		
Auxiliaries . . . . .		say 160,000
2. Prætorian or household troops, recruited from Latium, Etruria, Umbria, and the old <i>Coloniæ</i> alone, about 5500 . . . . .		5,500
exclusive of <i>Emeriti</i> , or <i>Vexillarii</i> , say 500 } . . . . .		1,000
and of the Batavian horse . . . . . 500 }		
3. Garrison of Rome (permanent)—		
4 Cohorts of 1,500 men each . . . . .		6,000
4. Semi-military force, " <i>Urbis vigiles</i> ," partly police, partly fire-brigade, say 700 . . . . .		700
		<u>Land forces = 343,850</u>
5. Naval Armament—		
Ravenna Fleet	} 250 galleys each.	
Misenum Fleet		
Forum Julii squadron, 125 galleys.		
Flotillas in Black Sea.		
Flotillas on Euphrates, Rhine, Danube.		

Omitting the slaves who rowed or formed the crews, the number of troops employed in the naval armament, including the "*Custodes Pontium et Vadorum*" who were not supplied from the *Castra Stativa*, can hardly have been less than 30,000.

Add to this the contingents furnished by such *Reguli* or independent kings, as Cotys of Thrace, Antiochus of Commagene, and Ariobarzanes of Cappadocia, etc., say 5000.

Land forces . . . . .	343,850
Naval forces . . . . .	30,000
Contingents . . . . .	5,000
Grand total . . . . .	<u>378,850 men.</u>

The pay of a Prætorian was . . . . .	£0 1 5 per diem.
The pay of a Legionary . . . . .	0 0 8½ per diem.
The pay of a Tribunus . . . . .	50 0 0 per annum.

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1859.

millions and a half cost us, the peaceable inhabitants of Europe, in daily pay, in rations, in clothing, and in housing.<sup>1</sup>

Go through these calculations carefully. Your time can hardly be better spent than in making up such

<sup>1</sup> The following approximate statement is taken from the *Almanach de Gotha*, and other sources, which have been carefully consulted. It does not include the marine forces of any state : and at the present moment,<sup>1</sup> when war is threatened, there are probably 300,000 more men under arms.

Russia	.	.	.	.	.	.	600,000
Austria	.	.	.	.	.	.	380,000
France	.	.	.	.	.	.	366,064
Prussia	.	.	.	.	.	.	161,000
Turkey	.	.	.	.	.	.	143,500
England	.	.	.	.	.	.	140,000
Lesser German States	.	.	.	.	.	.	124,592
Spain	.	.	.	.	.	.	112,000
Naples	.	.	.	.	.	.	92,586
Bavaria	.	.	.	.	.	.	87,682
Belgium	.	.	.	.	.	.	73,718
Switzerland	.	.	.	.	.	.	72,000
Holland	.	.	.	.	.	.	58,495
Sardinia	.	.	.	.	.	.	48,273
Sweden and Norway	.	.	.	.	.	.	42,000
Lesser Italian States	.	.	.	.	.	.	36,979
Principalities	.	.	.	.	.	.	34,144
Hanover	.	.	.	.	.	.	26,938
Portugal	.	.	.	.	.	.	26,849
Saxony	.	.	.	.	.	.	25,396
Denmark	.	.	.	.	.	.	21,000
Greece	.	.	.	.	.	.	9,686
San Marino	.	.	.	.	.	.	27
Total							2,682,929

<sup>1</sup> 1859.

accounts. Remember, too, that these unproductive soldiers might have been productive labourers and artisans, so that you have to add the loss of their labour to the cost of their keep.

Try to imagine these millions of armed men, defiling, without intermission, in long array before you: the bright, alert, and ready-handed Frenchmen, the stout, hardy Prussians, the well-drilled Austrians, the stalwart Danes, the gay Piedmontese, the sturdy Dutchmen, the much-enduring, long-coated Russians, the free-limbed, haughty, defiant Spaniards, and the cool, resolute, solid-looking Englishmen. Bright summer days would wane away, as this vast armament, with all its baggage and artillery, moved on before your wearied eyes; and all night long the unvaried tramp of men and horses would still be heard resounding. Something like a conception of the numbers may be formed by considering that if every man, woman, and child, to be found in London and its suburbs,<sup>1</sup> were transformed into a soldier, the number would about represent the effective force of men at arms in Europe. Consider how the most experienced Londoner loses his way sometimes in that great city, and discovers districts of which he knew nothing before. Let him imagine these new regions, as well as those parts of the town with which he is familiar, to be suddenly peopled with soldiers only. Let him

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<sup>1</sup> London and its suburbs include all the area from Putney to Woolwich, and from Streatham to Hampstead.

not only traverse the highways, but go into the houses, and see the sick and the aged and the infantine, who seldom come into the streets, and let him persevere in imagining these also to be soldiers, and London one huge camp. He will then have some idea of the extent of European armies, and may reflect upon what it would cost to feed these unproductive millions for a single day.

The first objection that will naturally be taken to any arguments drawn from the above alarming statement, is that the population of Europe has greatly increased. True : but consider at the same time that there are not now those immense differences in civilisation which should invite the movement of large hordes of men in any particular direction. The flourishing cities of the south of Europe have not now to protect themselves against Gauls, Huns, Goths, Visigoths, Allobroges, Belgæ, Quadi, Marcomanni, or other barbarians, who as naturally rushed upon the nearest community that was less uncivilised than themselves, as cold air rushes into a rarefied atmosphere. The Gauls and the Belgæ and the Allobroges have flourishing cities of their own. Except in few instances, aggression is not attempted now with the thought of permanent occupation—at least in Europe.<sup>1</sup> We are becoming a little too old and too wise for that.

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<sup>1</sup> Neither can I admit that, as regards India, our extension into Oude and the Punjaub are cases in point on the other side. A conquest, once begun, is likely to continue until what may be fairly



## DOES WAR SUPPORT WAR?

But you will say that the proposed occupation of the conquered territory is but one motive out of the many that have led to wars. This objection is quite just. I will, therefore, now endeavour to dispose of another motive,—namely, the hope of spoil.

There have been a few occasions in the world, and only a few, when this motive, the hope of spoil, has been justified by the result, and when the spoil has paid the expenses of the war. When a barbarian horde of Huns, or Visigoths, or Tartars, hurrying from a land where gold was rare, and riches of all kinds inaccessible, came down upon a fertile country, paid no expenses as they went along (having never heard of such a thing as a military chest), sacked flourishing cities, and returned to their barbarian homes enriched with spoil of all kinds, there was at least an appearance of success, as far as spoil was concerned. The barbarian, when he displayed to his astonished wife and children cups of gold and dishes of silver, and when he decked out his beloved with precious stones, seemed to have gained something by his foray. I say “seemed,” because perhaps it would have been better even for him to have stayed at home and cultivated his land, or looked after his cattle.

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called the natural limits of the conquest are reached. If all India had remained unconquered until now, the British would not, I imagine, think of commencing conquest there, for the sake of occupation.

When, again, European armies took the rich cities of Mexico and Peru, the spoil was such as might well make spoil a considerable motive for warfare.

It is probable, too, that the expenses of our first war in China were compensated by the Sycee silver we compelled the Chinese to pay us : it is more than probable that the expenses of the French revolutionary armies in Italy, under Buonaparte, were provided for by "contributions" from the Italian states.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As an instance of the requisitions made by the French "liberating" army in Italy, I subjoin the following "Conditions of the Armistice concluded between the General-in-Chief of the Army of Italy and Mons. Frederic, Commander of Est, Plenipotentiary of the Duke of Modena.

"The General-in-Chief of the Army of Italy grants to the Duke of Modena an Armistice, in order to give him time to send to Paris for the purpose of obtaining from the Executive Directory a Definitive Peace, on the following terms, to which Mons. Frederic, Commander of Est, and Plenipotentiary of Mons. the Duke of Modena, submits, and which he promises to fulfil ; viz.—

"1st. The Duke of Modena shall pay to the French Republic the sum of 7,500,000 livres, French money, of which three millions shall be immediately deposited in the chest of the Paymaster of the Army ; two millions within the space of fifteen days in the hands of Mons. Balbi, Banker of the Republic at Genoa ; and two millions five hundred thousand livres in the hands of the same banker at Genoa, within the space of a month.

"2. The Duke of Modena shall furnish 2,500,000 livres in provisions, powder, and other military stores, at the choice of the General-in-Chief, who shall likewise fix the periods and places, when and where the provisions shall be furnished.

"3. The Duke of Modena shall deliver up twenty paintings, taken from his gallery or his dominions, to be selected by persons nominated for that purpose."—*Original Journals of the Eighteen Campaigns of Napoleon Buonaparte*, vol. i. p. 31. London. No date.

But, as a general rule, in the present time, when armies have to pay their way, and when money knows so well how to make itself scarce upon the first rumour of its being about to be seized upon by force—in an age when swindling may pay, but robbery cannot—no rational man will contend that the movements of armies are in the least degree likely to be paid for by any spoil which it is allowable for them to take. That motive, therefore, unless there is a return to barbarism, is effectually disposed of.

#### WARS OF OPINION.

We come now to wars of opinion. In this respect also the motive is fast dying away from the minds of men. It is not that bigotry is by any means extinct, but that a great many men have discovered that you cannot propagate opinions securely by means of force. Moreover, the world of opinion, in the last century or two, has become divided into so many sections, that it is difficult to array them one against another in battle. When all Europe was distinctly marked off into Protestant and Catholic, you might bring these two great sections face to face in hostile array; but now, when there are so many shades of opinion in religious matters, and, consequently, so many different sections of persons anxious for toleration, and fearful lest the party to which they nominally belong should get the upper hand and oppress them, a thousand hindrances would be found in the way of getting up a great war upon religious opinion.

The same argument would apply to any other matter dependent upon opinion.

Then again, from whatever cause, the doctrine of non-interference as regards the domestic concerns of other states has become largely prevalent in modern times.

*Ellesmere.* Forgive me for interrupting, but what I am anxious to say will never come in so well as at this point of the discourse. You are disposing, Milverton, of various motives for war, but pray do not leave out of your consideration one which may appear ever so absurd, but is nevertheless a most important motive to deal with. Which is the stronger? That is a question pregnant with battle. You have a herd of bulls: they might enjoy their pasture comfortably together; there is plenty of herbage for all, but that important question, which is the strongest or the fiercest, must be settled first. You have a mob of boys: the same question has to be decided. Walter was only the other day telling me that Higgins was the "cock of the school," but that Johnson was very near him, and very ambitious to take his place, and that both Higgins and Johnson avoided tarts, and circumscribed themselves in puddings, in order to keep themselves in good training order. You may laugh, but this abstinence from tarts quite corresponds with the ready acceptance of taxes amongst us grown-up people for the purposes of war. Indeed I do not know but that the abstinence from tarts is not the greater sacrifice of the two. Man nature is the same as boy nature, and I do not see how you will dispose of this motive—the longing to be the first of two rivals—as glibly as you have disposed of other motives, which certainly have rather tended to become effete as the world has grown older.

*Milverton.* Thanks for the interruption, which was well-timed. I had not forgotten the powerful motive which you

have so humorously brought before us. Nay further, I admit that there are several motives for war, or at least for the maintenance of effective military force, which are by no means dead in men's minds. Nations have still many objects which they are anxious to further, if not by force, at least by the show of force, and which objects are really worthy of considerable sacrifices being made to attain them. I now return to my own line of argument.

#### THE FRAMEWORK FOR WARFARE.

The main question, and that to which the attention of statesmen, financiers, engineers, and other men of scientific skill should be directed, is this. They would say, we detest war : we have no notion of a profitable or justifiable war for the purpose of occupying a conquered territory, of gaining spoil, or of propagating opinion : but we must do something to maintain the sway we have gained, to protect our colonies until they can protect and rule themselves, to preserve commercial independence, to prevent the strong from persecuting the weak, and to cause that the great highway of the sea should be traversed without interruption except of a legitimate kind. For these purposes it is not necessary to be always going to war, but it may be requisite to maintain effectively the means of going to war. We want always to our hand a something which shall exactly represent the potential force of our nation ; and moreover, it must be a representative which can, at short notice, be turned into the thing it represents. That is the scientific problem before them. As in a good system of currency

you use for daily purposes but a small portion of the precious metals, having a representative of them which can at short notice be exchanged for the metals themselves, so the representative of a nation's force should be something which adequately represents it, and which can without much delay be converted into that force. The use of too much gold for daily purposes is simply waste. The use of too many soldiers and of too many stores is also simply waste. And the problem remains, how to maintain potentially the requisite effective force. All this may seem very clear and undeniable, almost entering into the regions of truism ; but I doubt whether, simple as the truth is, it is often clearly recognised by statesmen, and clearly put before legislative assemblies. Mark you, such a problem will not be solved by indiscriminate saving. Expenses would have to be increased in some directions ; though, as I believe, they might be greatly diminished in others ; and I must admit that the problem, though easy enough to state, is exceedingly difficult to solve, when you have to apply it to very numerous and very complicated details. Still there it is before us, and an attempt at solution must always be made.

#### MISERIES OF WAR.

It seems but a trite subject to dwell upon, the miseries of war and conquest ; but really the extent of woe which history discloses is something portentous, and should occasionally be brought back to our minds. A single

page which you read coldly and calmly through—a dull one perhaps, hurried over and soon forgotten—often contains the record of an amount of misery which must have touched a hundred thousand hearts, and an amount of destruction which must have called for the labour of a generation of hardworking men in replacement and reconstruction. The more we extend our researches, the more we are impressed by the extent and penetrating nature of this misery and destruction. Ofttimes, after following the regular blood-stained tramp of history, Babylonian, Assyrian, Median, Persian,—the wars of those bitter little Greek states—the formation of the Macedonian empire—the dissolution of that empire—the overwhelming movement of the remorseless Roman, crushing down all nations under his feet—the irruption of countless hordes of barbarians, with their Attilas, and afterwards their Timours and Ghengis Khans—the endless small bickerings, bathed in blood, of counts and dukes and roitelets, Merovingian, Carlovingian, and Capetian—the grand and foolish and pre-eminently bloodthirsty Crusades—the fierce disputes of pope and emperor and antipope—desolating religious wars, perhaps of thirty years' endurance—the hideous conquest of the New World, and the steady business-like wars of aggression and succession and annexation—the student thinks he knows something about the wreck and ruin which the quarrelsomeness of mankind has produced upon the earth. But then, deviating some day from the usual course of history, he comes upon the records of some

corner of the world, which he supposed to have been neglected by the demon of discord, and finds that there, too, there have been immense, continuous, and blood-thirsty wars, and what they call splendid achievements of all kinds; not hitherto much written about, because the names are hard and the provinces obscure, but which have not been neglected from any deficiency of atrocity,—until at last the wearied student begins to think that the surface of the earth, if rightly analysed, would prove one ensanguined mass of buried ruin.

Now, I ask, has nothing been gained by the study of all these records? It sometimes seems as if there had not, and as if mankind were ready, now as ever, to rush, upon the smallest provocation, into the accustomed track of deliberate carnage and certain desolation.

A more instructive course of reading could hardly be laid down for a student of history than his taking the records of some considerable town, and seeing the evils it had suffered from its foundation to the present day by wars and sieges. A good town to choose would be the most ancient town in Europe—Padua. Let the student see and consider the injuries that Padua has received from the bellicose disposition of the world. It is not taking an extreme case; for there is Padua, visible on the face of the earth, after all that it has suffered: whereas, of how many once flourishing towns may it be said that they now only furnish disputes to rival antiquaries, who do battle about the sites of these towns; which, in their



utter destruction, afford a grand field for learned argument—and final doubt.

#### NATIONAL DEBTS ; THEIR CONSEQUENCES.

If the wars between great countries did but end like a quarrel handsomely fought out between two common men, where there is a great noise, some severe blows given and taken, and a little blood-letting on both sides with hearty friendship afterwards, these wars, though horrible enough, would still be much less mischievous than they are. But a war combines the evils not only of a fight but of a disastrous law-suit. When the glory is gained or the defeat endured, there is still the reckoning to pay. And what a reckoning ! I know what may be said in favour of National Debts, and what may be urged in mitigation of the evils they cause. But the National Debts of most European States have long passed the limits of any usefulness (if such a thing there be as useful indebtedness), and have become onerous burdens, anxiously regarded by all thoughtful people who care for the welfare of their respective countries. What a sum it is that England, for instance, has to provide each year for the interest upon her debt, before she has a penny to spend upon internal administration. Not far from thirty millions of money. Consider how the internal administration is cramped and hindered—

“ By that eternal want of pence  
Which vexes public men.”

It is not only that art, science, and literature receive the shabbiest aid from the public ; but I am sure it will be within the cognisance of many persons acquainted with government, that even such a small sum as seven or eight hundred pounds might often be most judiciously expended in some public department (perhaps in the way of some experiment), and is not asked for, or is refused, because the Treasury must look narrowly, not to say meanly, to the expenditure of every farthing of the public money.

See, moreover, what an immense advantage is to be gained by the remission of taxes when we can afford to remit them :—how some branch of home manufacture which had been smitten and stunted by taxation, springs up into life<sup>1</sup> when it is even but partially relieved of its oppressing burden. Consider, too, how public works of the first utility languish for want of funds, and how the Government is seldom able to exercise what foresight it may possess, in making purchases that would be of signal service to the people, especially to the poor. To give but one instance ; what an excellent investment it would be for the public, if Government were able to purchase large vacant spots of ground in and about great towns, and to devote these spaces to public purposes : the best purpose, perhaps, being to leave them unbuilt upon. It is, however, but easy work to show the mischief of

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<sup>1</sup> I might refer to the manufactures of glass and stained papers as instances of the great benefit that has arisen from the remission of taxation.

large National Debts : it is not so easy to make people think of this mischief when they are eager for war, and before the reckoning has come in for them to pay.

But perhaps a still greater evil arising from war than even destruction of life, desolation of territory, and increase of taxation, lies in the general distraction of mind which it occasions throughout society, and the stop which it assuredly puts for a time to human progress. Here are we just beginning to understand something about the most potent elements in the universe, such as heat, light, and electricity : just beginning to investigate the laws of disease among town populations, and the modes of mitigating it ; just beginning to enter upon a bold career of scientific husbandry ; just beginning to endeavour that the poor should live in a state of less abject squalidity than that in which they have heretofore lived : and all our attention is to be diverted from these great objects to modes of attack and defence, and our minds to be confused by the noise of drums and trumpets. Surely this is a great evil, and never greater than at the present time of hope and promise.

#### WHO IS BENEFITED BY WAR ?

On the other hand it will, I know, be contended that war is not all loss.

"*Multis utile bellum*" is a well-known saying, and there is, unfortunately, some truth in these unpleasant words. But has any one numbered the millions to whom

peace is useful? Let us enter into reckonings upon this matter. War may be useful to contractors, armourers, the population of some seaport towns and arsenals, occasionally to certain classes of shipowners and merchants, and generally to those through whose hands the money raised for war passes. But how very small a proportion do these people bear to the great bulk of the population? How insignificant and transient are their interests compared with those of the mass of the people—a mere vanishing quantity, as the mathematician would say. We may also admit that war raises the price of provisions. Is that a benefit to the many? It is not even a benefit, in the long run, to the producer, whose sure gains are based upon the gradual improvement and permanent well-being of the great masses of the people. That the poorer classes should be able to buy a little more bread, a little more meat, and be able to house and clothe themselves a little better, is of far more importance to the land-owner, the corn-grower, the manufacturer, and the merchant, than any fitful gains that may be got out of the disordered state of things which war inevitably produces.

But to place the question on much broader grounds. In every country, Great Britain being by no means an exception, an immense amount of reproductive work requires to be done, in addition to that which is already going on. Can anybody contend that it is for the general interest that this reproductive work should be indefinitely deferred, and the most wasteful work that can be

imagined, *i.e.*, active warfare, bē undertaken in its stead? Men's energies are limited, and the two things, internal improvement and external outlay for war, cannot go on together. Who would not wish to have seen those seventy millions of money lately expended in the Russian war, appropriated instead to reproductive work at home? especially when we find it an exceeding difficulty in our greatest city to obtain three millions for the most urgent public purposes.

I suspect that few people thoroughly believe, or at least realise to themselves, the fact that those seventy millions have been spent in war, and that the Queen's subjects, far and near, are so much the poorer for that money having been so laid out, and would have been so much the richer, and more too, if it had been expended in industrial pursuits.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I sent this essay of Milverton's, while it was in type, to a well-known statesman of long standing in her Majesty's councils, with whom I had become acquainted when at college. The truth is, I was afraid lest Milverton should have been led into exaggeration upon some of the above points. This statesman, however, instead of restraining the argument, carries it farther. These are his words in a note upon the above passage :—

“We raised a Parliamentary loan of £8,000,000 for India last year, and a further sum of £12,000,000, in England and India, will probably be required during the present session. How different would have been the result if these immense sums could have been applied in growing the raw materials for our manufactures in the valley of the Ganges, raising there the wages of the ryot, and facilitating the payments of the landed proprietors in India, extending the manufacturing and commercial industry of Lancashire and of the West Riding, thus benefiting simultaneously the Eastern and Western dominions of our Queen.”

People read of credits voted, year by year, for millions of money, of issues of Exchequer bills, of certain great financiers attending at the Chancellor of the Exchequer's office, and as they read these important announcements, they almost think that the expenditure is in some mysterious way provided for by words and paper and certain financial jugglery. They do not fully comprehend the fact that so much solid capital has gone from them and their heirs for ever. Then, again, taxation is a subtle thing, and you have to follow it into all its ramifications before you discover and rightly appreciate the mischief which it does to you and your descendants, when the bulk of the money raised by that taxation has been spent unproductively. To ensure good internal administration, to maintain such a readiness for war as may prevent war, or such as may make war, when it comes suddenly, less expensive—no money judiciously spent can be considered to be wasted. But all beyond that is pure waste ; if not for the few, at least for the great mass of the people, whose interests every statesman is bound to consult first. There is then, I contend, no argument for war to be found in the fact that it may be useful to some private persons, or to some few classes of the community.

Amongst the greatest curses attendant upon European wars, as they affect this country, are foreign loans. We cannot prevent money going where it pleases. It is one of the freest of earthly things. It will not be besieged, or impressed, or severely controlled in any way. Still it is well to note the mischief that occurs from its free

movement in any particular direction. Every improving man, every person who is striving to produce more and more out of land, or by manufactures, is to a certain extent stayed and hindered by these foreign loans. They must make money dearer for him. If this is not a great national evil, it would be difficult to say what is.

When I am asked :—" But what plan do you propose for reducing the military establishments of Europe ?" I cannot say that I have any plan, or that I believe that any one else has. But we may gradually induce such a state of feeling and of opinion, as would, almost unobservedly, lead to that reduction. Men, I know, are seldom satisfied with these undefined and distant hopes. The human mind delights in specifics, and is apt to believe that for every evil there is a specific remedy. If something hitherto unknown were found out, there would, they are apt to think, be no more wars. But there is no specific, I fear, to be found out for persuading potentates to disband armies ; and there is always the pretext, and often the good excuse, for a potentate, that he cannot disband any portion of his army while a neighbouring potentate maintains his in full force. And who is to begin the good work ? Happy indeed would it be for mankind if the work were of a nature that could be left to obscure students to settle. All that they can do is to point out the nature and extent of the evil, and to dwell upon it without exaggerating it ; to illustrate from the rich resources of history the magnitude of the evil ; to

prophecy disaster from it when they can honestly do so ; and to show that its consequences are such as in the long run to promote the destruction, rather than the stability, of empires. If they can sow any of this good seed, they must leave it to fructify in the minds of other men of their own time, and in the minds of other men of future generations. For this is not an evil that will be cured in a day.

#### HINDRANCES TO WAR.

As one way of hindering war, we should not hesitate to put before the masters of mankind the sternest and truest words as regards their responsibilities in this matter.

It is to be doubted whether any powerful and governing person ever thinks—whether any such person has ever thought—with sufficient gravity and just terror of the tremendous responsibility he incurs in beginning or continuing war. Men are not without remorse, without terrible remorse, for their private sins. But how many of these sins are committed in moments of passion, under hideous temptations, from dire pressure of circumstances, when the actors are goaded by fear, anger, envy, want, jealousy, or other imperative scourges of the human soul. War is mostly a matter of calculation and of judgment. It is not, at least in modern times, a hasty affair. The promoter of war has, in general, plenty of time to reconsider, with all due sobriety, the resolve which he may have made in anger, or in the intoxication of vain-glory.



The world is old enough now to have furnished sufficient examples, even to the least literate of monarchs, generals, or statesmen, of wars which have terminated with signal success apparently, *i.e.*, as far as the mere war was concerned, but with utter failure as far as the purposes were concerned for which the war was really undertaken. The coveted territory is not added, or, if added, is found to be a burden rather than a gain ; the ally, to please whom the war was begun, is alienated, rather than made grateful ; the prestige of power and sagacity is damaged rather than augmented ; the home government is rendered more difficult rather than less so, now that the war has come to a conclusion. These results do not always happen ; but they have happened with sufficient frequency to make the boldest man, if he have any wisdom corresponding with his boldness, pause and ponder before he undertakes an enterprise which all history has pronounced to be so dubious in its issues as war. I put aside the ugly questions which such a man should ask himself ; whether the result, if gained, can compensate for the enormous amount of human suffering which it must demand, and whether he, the main promoter of the war, is in the eyes of God or man justified in incurring the awful hazard of producing calamities of which, in this world, he has often, personally, to endure so small a share. Taking all these things into consideration, it may well, I repeat, be doubted whether any conqueror, or warlike statesman, or military monarch, has ever done his conscientious scruples sufficient justice before he has

come to the dread resolve of commencing a war, the burden of which commencement is to be upon his soul for ever. Better be the maimed soldier, the ruined peasant, the bayoneted child, the dishonoured mother,—better endure the whole misery of a disastrous campaign, collected and heaped upon one person, if such a thing could be,—than have the fatal responsibility which lies upon that man who, in wantonness, or selfishness, or even from reckless miscalculation, has been the main promoter of a war that might have been avoided.

I have used advisedly the words “the main promoter of a war,” because, even with powerful, warlike, and self-willed monarchs, there might be few wars if their councillors were like the vizier of the Persian king, Nushiravan.

The courser of this king had borne him, when hunting, far away from the crowd of his courtiers, and his vizier alone kept up with him, and rode by his side. They came upon a desolate village. Two birds there were conferring together in song, “and their notes were more contracted than the heart of the king.”

“What is this twittering?” said the monarch.

“Oh, light of the earth,” replied the vizier, “I would tell, if the king would be a learner by it.

“This bird gave in marriage, yesterday, his daughter to that bird, who demands, early in the morning, the bridal fortune : saying, ‘This deserted village thou wilt give up to us : and so many besides thou wilt make over to us.’”



"The other bird replies, 'Depart from this proposal ; see the injustice of Nushiravan ; and go ; be not anxious. If the king be such, in no long time, for this one desolate village, I will give thee a hundred thousand.'"

The king smote his head with his hand, and wept. "See my tyranny," he exclaimed, "that I make a seat for owls where there should be only tame birds.

"The Creator gave me a kingdom to the intent that I should not do that which can produce no good. I, whose brass they have besmeared with gold [his courtiers' flattery], am doing those acts which he has not ordered."

And the monarch's anguish was so keen, and his loud cries of self-reproach were so warm, "that by his breath the shoes of his horse were softened."

He rode back to the station of his troops, and his face was not as the face of the king Nushiravan. "The scent of his lenity reached throughout his whole empire." Thenceforward he diffused justice and trampled on iniquity, and until his last breath he departed not from these good courses.<sup>1</sup>

But there are few viziers like the vizier of Nushiravan ; and the despotic monarch seldom finds one by his side who can interpret the twittering of birds so wisely, and who dares to rebuke with boldness the man who sustains him in power and emolument.

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<sup>1</sup> See the translation of this fable of the poet Nizami, in Sir Wm. Jones's *Works*, vol. iv. p. 387. London, 1807.

## TEMPTATION AFFORDED BY LARGE STANDING ARMIES.

As some excuse for monarchs, we must own that the natural disposition of mankind is to make use of whatever they possess, whether it be advisable to use it or not. The man who has the gift of eloquence cannot bear an enforced silence, however injurious to himself it may be for him to speak out,

“Et sua mortifera est facundia.”

The man who has the rare faculty of exquisite expression will write books, though the writing of books is, as some think, the most deplorable occupation, except grinding metals or working in a coal-pit, that has yet been invented by human beings. Something, however, has to be said for this use of certain faculties, as there is generally behind these faculties a force and power which require to be used. Nature seldom makes such incomplete beings as those would be who had a wonderful power of expression, but yet had nothing to express. The danger from an injudicious use of power is much greater when the power is arrived at by accident, and is not by any means innate. Hence the man who has half a million of soldiers to play with is grievously tempted to use them, whether the use be wise or not. You might nearly as well trust a child with a large whip, and expect him not to slash about with it in a most inconsiderate manner, as to expect a man who has at his command immense armies (perhaps an hereditary acquisition) not to do some-

thing with them, however uncalled-for that something may be. Hence in all states the wholesome dread that there should always be of large standing armies being maintained upon any pretext whatever. This is the great merit of constitutional government, that with a view to home affairs, it naturally has a wise jealousy of the existence of such armies. Constitutional governments are not much more averse from foreign war than despotic governments are; but fortunately the means for immediate warfare are never so ready to their hands.

It may be noticed that these large standing armies are comparatively a modern invention. When barons and their retainers were summoned by the tenure of feudal service to assist their monarchs in a foolish war, if they chose to go, they went, and pillaged, and devastated; but when they came back, and were disbanded, the country had not to bear the expense of a standing army, and the barons returned to their private affairs, perhaps to carry on feuds with one another (their private business), and the state was not exhausted by maintaining men at arms for the especial purposes of monarchs.

THE INVADING NATION POSSIBLY THE GREATER  
SUFFERER.

There is a very curious result of our partial advance in civilisation as regards its influence on the effects of war, to which I beg to call your especial attention. It is this: that, comparing modern times with ancient, the

nation sending out armaments often suffers now proportionately more than the nation which has to bear the war in its own territory. To understand this fully, we must look into details. Follow in imagination the track of an English army commanded by the late Duke of Wellington. It pays its way; private property is strictly protected, as far at least as the commander-in-chief and his officers can protect it—we all know how the Duke ordered capital punishment on one occasion for a very trifling theft;—and, in general, the track of that army is not marked by any deep indents of destruction, by any at least which the industry of a year or two may not easily efface. Now, take the other side of the question. The nation that provides and sends out the invading army has become more responsible, less inclined to injure wantonly, and more taxable, as civilisation has advanced; and, since it may cost more to send out forces than to receive the shock of them, the invaders may ultimately suffer far more than the invaded. To this day I can clearly trace, in the poor habitations around me in the country, the effects of Pitt's war taxes; and it is not too much to say that many a fever distinctly corresponding with the expensive movements of British armies abroad, is now ravaging our English cottage homes.<sup>1</sup>

The above may appear far-fetched and over-subtle; but it is not so. The evils of warfare as they tell upon

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<sup>1</sup> The results of the excise duty on bricks, and of the window-tax, will be visible for another century in the ill-constructed and fever-fostering tenements of our lower classes.

home comfort are disguised, and pass under other names ; but they are not on that account the less caused by war ; and it must be admitted that until civilisation reaches that point when costly armaments and the maintenance of large standing armies are thoroughly discouraged—are discouraged, indeed, as much as cruelty and needless destruction in carrying on warfare—these disguised evils will continue to bear an increasing disproportion to the more manifest and therefore more controllable miseries of war.

#### THE MISCHIEF OF AN ARMED PEACE.

After what I have said of the evils of actual warfare, you cannot charge me with underrating them. But I really do believe that the mischief, if not the misery of an armed peace, is more to be apprehended. This sword hanging over us takes somewhat of the savour out of every banquet. A great war ended, there is some chance of disbandment : and for the masses of mankind it is the maintenance of large armies, and not the war itself, that may prove the greatest evil ; causing general depression, augmenting taxation, hindering trade, and circumscribing adventure — moreover, perpetrating all this mischief steadily, as a matter of course, that attracts, comparatively, but little notice. There is no end to the increase of armies ; it goes on silently from year to year, and every year valuable materials of all kinds are used up in a way which will soon go out of fashion. We find it difficult enough, in northern climes, to provide warmth

for our poor people : think of the coals used for war-steamers even in times of peace. In fine, it really becomes a question whether we had better not have a war once in every ten years, which might lead to some considerable disbandment, than a peace full of daily alarms which gives good reason for a constant increase of armies, and a constant addition of expenditure for warlike purposes.

#### HOW GREAT CHANGES IN OPINION TAKE PLACE.

In what I am going to say now, you may think that I am taking you through devious paths ; but you must believe that they will lead up to an important branch of the subject : as they certainly will do.

How like we are to our fathers !—in the main characteristics of thought, I mean. It is true that much is changed about us physically, but it is not such a change as affects the habits of thinking. Take the rapidity of locomotion for instance. These days of steam and electricity seem certainly very different from the time when, as boys, we used to be taken, on the first of May, to see the mail coaches turn out from the Post Office in all their new gear, and with all their fine array. And what a pretty sight, by the way, it was ; one, I am sure, which the boy who had once seen it would never forget. But observe, the ideas of men are not the least changed upon the main subject. They saw the advantages of swift locomotion ; they exceedingly desired that swift-



ness; and though there may have been some surprise as to the new means adopted for attaining that desired end, there was not the slightest radical change of thought engendered in the matter. The same course of argument might be applied to many other instances. Painless operations in surgery, which seem to me the greatest invention of modern times, are but a following out of the skilful appliances which had long been brought to bear upon the same end. If we take literature, which is no doubt an admirable reflex of the current thought of men, we shall see how little change there is in the nature of that current. The conversational wit of our day, the best kind of that wit, differs very little from that of Selwyn or of Jekyll: the best kind of writing, from that of Swift, Addison, Bolingbroke, and Temple. Nay, to go farther back, how closely we are related in habits of thought and the ways of looking at anything to the great writers of Elizabeth's time. Bacon's words have occasionally an antique show about them, but the current of thought is for the most part such as we think now, or as we incline to think the moment we have heard it. Farther back even, and also in different countries, there is the same similarity to modern thought. Charles the Fifth and his ministers are very like modern statesmen in the essential elements of their ways of thinking. But, as you go back, there does come a time in history when this similarity is considerably broken up and diversified; and I contend that the change does not take place gradually, but as it were, *per saltum*.

If, for example, you take the beginning of the fifteenth century, this suddenness of change will be visible. I could not illustrate my position better than by bringing such a work as Monstrelet's *Chronicle* before you. That work commences in the year 1400. Now, as you probably will not read Monstrelet, and certainly cannot read him now, I will give you an instance of what I mean. Very early in the *Chronicle* there is an account, amongst others which resemble it, of a general challenge given by the Seneschal of Hainault.<sup>1</sup>

“To all knights and esquires, gentlemen of name and arms, without reproach, I, Jean de Verchin, Seneschal of Hainault, make known that with the aid of God, of our Lady, of my Lord St. George, and of the lady of my affections, I intend being at Coucy the first Sunday of August next ensuing, unless prevented by lawful and urgent business, ready on the morrow to make trial of the arms hereafter mentioned, in the presence of my most redoubted lord, the Duke of Orleans, who has granted me permission to hold the meeting at the above place.

“From respect to the gentleman [he alludes to the person who may accept the challenge], and to afford him more pleasure for having had the goodness to accept my invitation, I promise to engage him promptly on foot unless bodily prevented, without either of us taking off any part of the armour which we had worn in our assault on horseback: we may, however, change our visors, and lengthen the plates of our armour according to the number of strokes with the sword and dagger, as may be thought proper, when my companion shall have determined to accomplish my deliver-

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<sup>1</sup> I need hardly remark that I have made this quotation myself: Milverton merely gave us a sketch of the passage. [D.]

ance by all these deeds of arms, provided, however, that the number of strokes may be gone through during the day, at such intermissions as I shall point out.

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“Should it happen, after having agreed with a gentleman to perform these deeds of arms, as we are proceeding toward the judge he had fixed upon, that I should meet another gentleman willing to deliver me, who should name a judge nearer my direct road than the first, I would in that case perform my trial in arms with him whose judge was the nearest; and when I had acquitted myself to him, I would then return to accomplish my engagement with the first, unless prevented by any bodily infirmity.

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“That all gentlemen who may incline to deliver me from my vow may know the road I propose to follow, I inform them, that under the will of God, I mean to travel through France to Bordeaux,—thence to the country of Foix, to the kingdoms of Navarre and Castile, to the shrine of my Lord St. James at Compostella. On my return, if it please God, I will pass through the kingdom of Portugal, thence to Valencia, Arragon, Catalonia, and Avignon, and recross the kingdom of France, having it understood if I may be permitted to travel through all these countries in security, to perform my vow, excepting the kingdom of France and the county of Hainault.”<sup>1</sup>

Here is a total change of thought. Nobody nowadays has the slightest idea of gathering renown in the way which the Seneschal of Hainault proposed for himself. And to this love of duelling for duelling’s sake, what a contrast is afforded by modern notions on the same.

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<sup>1</sup> MONSTRELET, chap. viii.

subject, when duelling, even for a good cause, is universally stigmatised, at least amongst us, as something foolish as well as wrong.

But perhaps a still more striking instance of the change in the ways of thinking, which I fancy I recognise, is to be found in reading the celebrated defence (also chronicled in Monstrelet) made by Master Jean Petit on behalf of the Duke of Burgundy for the acknowledged murder of the Duke of Orleans. The transparent sophistry, the wonderful pedantry, the astonishing audacity with which the orator brings in St. Paul's exhortation to charity, in order to countenance one of the foulest assassinations that ever was committed, make you feel, when you are reading this defence, that you have entered into a different period of thought from that which characterises your own times. Also, when you consider the immense barbarities which were committed in those times during the long and bloody wars between the French factions of Burgundy and Armagnac, and during the contests of the French and English in the same period, you must admit that there has been since then a great change of thought and feeling in the mode of warfare.

But alas! if you come to that which presses most deeply upon the resources, the comforts, and the well-being of a people—namely the maintenance of numerous armies in time of peace, you will find very little change of thought or practice. All that change has yet to be introduced. It is no doubt a much more difficult thing

to persuade potentates to reduce the number of their armies, than to cause them to become more and more humane in the actual proceedings and practices of warfare. It is easy to perceive the mischief of indiscriminate slaughter : it is not at first sight easy to perceive the full mischief of maintaining larger armies than a country's needs demand, or than its resources will bear. But we may fairly hope that such knowledge will come—perhaps come suddenly rather than gradually, and an amelioration take place in this respect which would astonish those persons who in these days maintain the necessity for upholding large armies, as much as it would astonish the seneschals, dukes, counts, and vidames of Monstrelet's time to find the small amount of intentional barbarity with which war is conducted in our times. In such a great subject as we are considering, where the roots of evil lie so deeply both in human nature and in the present tangled circumstances of Europe, we must have recourse to history to gain admonition and comfort, and to see that in the long course of years changes of thought arise, if not gradually, at least, as I have said, *per saltum*, which would seem to any one generation absolutely Utopian, if not impossible.

#### RESTRAINTS UPON WARLIKE TENDENCIES.

In estimating the chances of any restraint being put upon the tendencies to war which still exist in Europe, we must consider how the individual man who may wish

to resist these tendencies is placed, and what contrast his position affords to that of a man, similarly minded, who lived in former ages. I am afraid that the contrast will not be so much in favour of the modern man of peace as might have been anticipated. The well-known lines—

“ But war’s a game which were their subjects wise,  
Kings would not play at,”

are more plausible than true. Consider the difficulties under which the causes of peacefulness labours, in so far as it is to be promoted by private persons.

As civilisation advances, the division of labour becomes more and more exact and well-defined. Each man has enough to do in pursuing his calling or profession. All that happens in the world is, or at least seems to be, of trifling import to him, in comparison with his failure or success in that calling or profession. He has become part of a great machine, over the main movements of which he has scarcely any direct control. The accomplished surgeon, as well versed perhaps as any man in the miseries and sufferings in war, hears of warlike intentions on the part of his government, or of some foreign power, regrets exceedingly to hear of such intentions, but can only give a few of his spare thoughts to the subject, and next to no action to avert the evil, for his profession is one that mostly demands the whole energies of the man. The merchant hears “on ’Change” of wars and rumours of wars, and to few men is war more odious than to the merchant; but these wars bring to him an increase of anxious thought and of necessity

for prudent action in his own immediate affairs. He is, therefore, more than ever absorbed in them ; and, taking society generally, though, as the years proceed, there is less disposition to be warlike in the individual man, and less capability, from the division of labour, of his being so, there is also less control over war than when each man wore a sword, knew how to use it, and had in some measure the beginnings and the issues of wars in his own hands. In ancient times it was almost impossible for kings to maintain a war which was unpopular with their barons, or even amongst the retainers of those barons.

So far the modern state of things is unfavourable to a restraint being put upon the warlike tendencies of monarchs. The absence of any great controlling power in the Church is also unfavourable. We must not forget that the Church did on many occasions interfere to prevent war, and that we owe to her influence the existence of that remarkable law in the Middle Ages, called "The Truce of God,"<sup>1</sup> by which warfare was forbidden during three days of the week.

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<sup>1</sup> "As the authority of the civil magistrate was found ineffectual to remedy this evil, the church interposed. . . . A general reconciliation took place ; and a resolution was formed, that no man should in future attack or molest his adversaries during the seasons appropriated for the celebration of the great festivals of the church, or from the end of Thursday in each week to the beginning of Monday in the week ensuing : the three intervening days being considered as particularly holy, Christ's passion having happened on one of those days, and His resurrection on another. This cessation from hostility was called 'The Truce of God ;' and three complete days, in every week, allowed such a considerable space for the pas-

On the other hand, there are some influences in modern times which give peculiar powers for restraint being put upon war. Men are better able to communicate their opinions to one another, and to create, with considerable rapidity (for that is the main point) a great change in public opinion. Public opinion also is more potent, and reaches even to thrones with singular facility.

Again, there is a much greater power of combination than there ever was before, not only amongst people of the same race and country, but throughout the whole civilised world. It is not impossible that great leagues and associations may yet be formed amongst the principal peoples in the world, having for their object, to put a restraint upon the intolerable burdens and miseries of needless wars.

Upon the whole, though the process of time has not made everything favourable to the lovers of peace, and though, on the contrary, it has introduced some additional difficulties in stemming the tide of war, it has yet created new and extraordinary powers which may be brought to bear upon the warlike tendencies of monarchs or of nations, and which may ultimately prevail. At any rate, there is no ground for abject discouragement in the matter.

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sions of the antagonists to cool, and for the people to enjoy a respite from the calamities of war, as well as to take measures for their own security, that, if the Truce of God had been strictly observed, it would have gone far towards putting an end to private wars."—RUSSELL'S *History of Modern Europe*, vol. i. p. 380. London, 1818.



Perhaps the greatest advance that has been made in public opinion of a kind to hinder warfare, is the general opinion in England against going to war with such of our colonies as may be reluctant to continue in association with us, and which are able to shift for themselves. If our feelings were expressed in words, the following would, I imagine, be what we should say: "We are proud to have sent you forth; we are willing to defend you and to fight for you (we should never desert a colony that held by us); but we decline to fight with you, if you are determined to sever yourselves from us, and have attained sufficient growth to do so."

Such, I believe, to be, in the main, the opinion of England with regard to her colonies. It were to be wished that other nations took a similar view of their dependencies, when those dependencies had proved themselves, for a considerable period of time, unwilling to be ruled by the Imperial State which they have been assigned to. If other nations did think so, we should not now<sup>1</sup> be trembling on the verge of a war that is to settle whether a large part of reluctant Italy is to be governed by a Germanic power, which, even if it succeeds in maintaining its sway over a thoroughly alien race, will only do so by the maintenance of such armies, as must be a distress to its other subjects, and an injury to the civilised world—as all large standing armies are.

I do not maintain that the above is a case at all

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<sup>1</sup> 1859.

analogous to that of England and her colonies, but it presents a difficulty which would be solved by a still further advance of public opinion in a direction adverse to war.

In reply to what I have just urged about the force of opinion, you may say that it does not easily reach a despot's mind. Not easily, perhaps, until the opinion becomes pretty general. But if there were a public opinion about war, at all corresponding with the opinion of those persons whom I am now addressing, do you think it would have no weight with warlike monarchs? If a monarch knew, for instance, that there were a great many persons who thought he was doing a very childish and silly thing in going to war, and who had a sincere contempt for him because he wasted the resources of his subjects in warlike preparations, do you think that these opinions would have no influence upon him? Why, Haman could not bear the existence of one man, Mordecai, who sat at the king's gate, and did not do honour to Haman. For a man to despise public opinion he must be an extraordinary man, if not a great one—quite great enough to come to the conclusion from his own thinking, and without the influence of others, that needless war is a most sorry employment of his own faculties, and of his kingdom's resources. Once formed the requisite public opinion: there is little to be doubted about its potency.

## PROSPECT OF INVASION.

In speaking of the subject of war, it is natural to think especially of one's own country, and, in doing so, to consider that apprehension of invasion which periodically besets the English. It is surely right that they should sometimes entertain, and very gravely entertain, this apprehension. But it need not become a bugbear. Let me ask what great nation has not been invaded? Were not the Greeks invaded by the Persians, the Romans by the Carthaginians, the Swiss by the Burgundians? and with what result in each case history declares. There would be much calamity—there might (I firmly believe there would) result great honour from our being invaded; there certainly would be no shame in the mere fact of an invasion; and the fear of such an event ought not to lead to any needless outlay of money which, to use a good expression of Lord Sydenham's, much ridiculed at the time, had better "fructify in the pockets of the people." As to making England or any other country impregnable, it is simply impossible in these times; and the same judgment and moderation which it is admitted should be shown in maintaining the means for attack, must not be overstepped in preparing the means for defence.<sup>1</sup> In estimating the chances, it is surely at least nine to one, that the next war that England will have to undertake

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<sup>1</sup> It may be doubted whether Pitt's Martello towers have proved of any advantage adequate to the expense bestowed upon them.

will be to protect some weak power rather than to defend herself.

There is another consideration which much alarms even the most thoughtful men, and those who are least likely to give way to any rash alarm; and that is, the belief that England is unkindly regarded by most foreign states, and that they would be glad to see her humbled. There is something in this notion; but not nearly so much, I suspect, as most of the alarmists are inclined to suppose. When it comes to the serious question of whether England is to decline into a second-rate power, most of the kindred nations will be ready to drop any small jealousies. They will ask themselves:—"What have we suffered from the predominance of this great power? what injury has she really done us?" It seems to me that they could not give any answer which would warrant them in regarding her difficulties with any but the gravest apprehension for themselves.

We have our little quarrels, sometimes rather bitter and disagreeable, with our brethren on the other side of the Atlantic: but I am persuaded that the good and true men in America would never be so traitorous to their race, and to the traditions of its freedom, as to join wittingly, and for any long period, in any attempt to pull down England from the position she has so long held amidst European nations.

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WHAT CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN OPINION.

In commenting upon the great changes which take place in opinion during long periods of time, and from which alone we are to hope for such a change of opinion in Europe as would discourage the maintenance of unnecessary military force, I cannot help noticing the changes which have taken place in equally great matters. Go back to the times, not so very far distant, in which torture was really believed to be a means of getting at truth—an idea almost inconceivable in our day. Consider again the belief in witchcraft. Perhaps the most potent weapon that Philip the Fair and his atrocious band of lawyers had against Pope Boniface, and against the Order of Knights Templars, was the ready accusation of magic. Against Boniface it was deposed that he had been seen practising strange magical rites of a sacrificial character.<sup>1</sup> Against the Templars it was deposed that

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<sup>1</sup> “Besides all this, there were what in those days would perhaps be heard with still deeper horror—magical rites and dealings with the powers of darkness. Many witnesses had heard that Benedetto Gaetani, that Pope Boniface, had a ring, in which he kept an evil spirit. Brother Berard of Soriano had seen from a window the Cardinal Gaetani, in a garden below, draw a magic circle, and immolate a cock over a fire in an earthen pot. The blood and the flame mingled; a thick smoke arose. The Cardinal sat reading spells from a book, and conjuring up the devils. He then heard a terrible noise and wild voices, ‘Give us our share.’ Gaetani took up the cock, and threw it over the wall—‘Take your share.’ The Cardinal then left the garden, and shut himself up alone in his most secret chamber, where throughout the night he was heard in

they worshipped a magic head that looked both ways—accusations which, however absurd, could be readily supported by the infallible means of torture. Let us now make a stride from the time of Philip the Fair to that when Lord Mansfield adorned the chief seat of English justice. What did that great magistrate say, when some poor woman was arraigned before him for magic arts, and especially accused of walking through the air? “*My opinion is that this good woman be suffered to return home, and whether she shall do this, walking on the ground or riding through the air, must be left entirely to her own pleasure, for there is nothing contrary to the laws of England in either.*”

The author of the *Spanish Conquest in America* has said, what a great history the history of a great cause would be. He might, however, have imagined a much greater history—the rise, the flourishing, and the fall of a remarkable opinion; such, for instance, as the belief in the possibility of witchcraft, or in the utility of torture. It would be seen how such an opinion arises of necessity in barbarism; is afterwards fed and supported by a barbarous kind of learning; how science, “falsely so called,” fosters it; how it rises to power and becomes intertwined

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deep and earnest conversation, and a voice, the same voice, was heard to answer. This witness deposed likewise to having seen Gaetani worshipping an idol in which dwelt an evil spirit. This idol was given to him by the famous magician, Theodore of Bologna, and was worshipped as his God.”—MILMAN, *Hist. of Latin Christianity*, vol. v. p. 374.

with great institutions ; what hideous cruelties it commits when arrived at the plenitude of its development ; how the common sense and common humanity of mankind, secretly and almost without owning it to themselves, begin to rebel against it ; how tenderly nurtured enthusiasts (for a tender nurture makes a loving heart) here and there write and speak and act against the evil opinion, and end by becoming martyrs to it ; how scientific discoveries and great works of thought silently protest against it, and these cannot be put to the torture, and cannot be put in prison, and cannot be made martyrs of ; and how at last science, humanity, and good sense, either with or without a revolution, rise up together against the evil opinion, cast it off, and put it behind them for ever. The whole world opens its eyes fully, looks at the dead thing, and wonders that it has ever been dominated by such a miserable Sejanus, which is now contemptuously borne along amidst the curses of a dis-enslaved population.

During the last few sentences Milverton had been walking up and down and firing his volleys of words into us in rather a warm manner.

*Ellesmere.* Pray sit down, my good fellow, and do not be so excited. It does not pay, as we used to say at College. We are not an indignation meeting.

*Milverton* (sitting down). Well, it is foolish ; but most people, I suppose, have some particular subject upon which they are liable to go off into a tempest,—and with me legal persecution is that subject. I can understand, and not be

irrationally intolerant of, any brutality in fair fighting ; any brutality in, or after, conquest ; any unscrupulousness of ambition which egotistically sweeps away all obstacles before it ; but when you come to a court of law, there, if nowhere else in the world, one does expect something like moderation and rationality. You can have no idea of the horrors of that persecution of the Knights Templars unless you have studied the subject in some such pages as those of Dean Milman's *Latin Christianity*. By the way, have you ever seen the signatures of a man before and after torture ? The former clear and bold : the latter, a quivering mass of illegibility. Those lawyers of Philip the Fair are an abomination to me.

*Ellesmere*. Yes, we were not a good set in that time ; nor a very good set in Charles the Second's time. My predecessor, Sir William Scroggs, was not a highly principled character. I wonder whether I should have been as bad. I suppose I should : rascality is catching.

But now that you are calm again, Milverton, you may proceed, and I will not interrupt you further.

MILVERTON. Before concluding, I must protest against its being supposed that I think we should be niggardly in the management of our military establishments. If we are to have a new barrack, let it be thoroughly well contrived and well built. Every good soldier is such a valuable production that we can hardly be too careful of him. It is waste upon waste to have a large army, and because it is large, to be careless about the means of maintaining it in the highest state of health, strength, skill, and general efficiency. A similar remark requires to be made as to stores, fortifications, and all the muniments and apparatus of warfare. And perhaps there is a



still more important consideration to be kept in mind by a state which depends, for the recruiting of its armies, upon the voluntary system,—namely, *that it should so behave towards its soldiers and sailors in all questions arising out of enlistment, disbandment, gratuities, pensions, and the like, that its justice, not to say its liberality, should never be doubted.* A belief throughout the humbler classes that the Government is considerate or even generous in such matters is actually worth a large sum of money, and is almost equal in times of peace to an additional armament: at least it will enable you to dispense with that armament for a time. What credit is to the financier in the power of raising money swiftly and upon easy terms, this good report of the nation's generosity is to the Government in the power of raising rapidly, upon an emergency, large armies, and, what is still more difficult without that good report, of manning rapidly large fleets.

#### UNAVOIDABLE WARS.

It is most unfair to represent as advocate of a creeping or unjust peacefulness those who, anxiously foreseeing many of the evil consequences of war, are strenuous in producing facts and arguments that tend to dissuade from it. A gift is not the less a gift because the giver knows full well the value of what he is giving: and the people who go to war without reluctance do not prove their valour or their magnanimity by so doing. We all know that there are occasions when, as on the threat of foreign

invasion, a nation gathers itself up in all its strength, when selfish aims are thrown aside, when ordinary life is felt to be tame, and buying and selling are not much thought of, when even great griefs, that are but private, fall lightly on us, and when the bonds of society are knit together so closely, that the whole nation produces and presents its full power of resistance. Then it is that the ambitious man forgets his ambition, the covetous man, if possible, his money ; the civic crown with its glorious motto "*ob cives servatos*," becomes the chief desire of all brave men, and tender mothers feel like the Spartan matron of old, who, as she adjusted the buckler on her young warrior's arm, could exclaim, "Come back, either with it, or upon it."

And still a nobler occasion is that when, without one thought of self-aggrandisement, one aspiration after mere glory, or any of the pride of strength, a nation quietly resolves that it is its duty for the interests of the world, or for the defence of the oppressed, to come out to battle ; and it does come out sternly and sadly.

But these are rare occasions ; and the men and other resources of a great country are not to be played away in paltry vain wars arising from stupid complications, which diplomacy ought to settle, or indeed in any contests that are not grounded upon dire necessity or absolute duty.

If statesmen are heedlessly inclined to imperil that national strength which they are especially bound to preserve intact if they can, we must bid them think of their

own poor people at home, of their daily wants and privations, already much aggravated by previous wars, many of which cannot be justified; and we may venture to remind these statesmen that in the long catalogue of human crimes there is none more deadly to others than giving provocation to a war, which might, by just forbearance, have been avoided.

Happily, however, it is not our own statesmen who need the most, or who, perhaps, need at all, to have such admonitions addressed to them.

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*Ellesmere.* This essay, or rather this speech which you have just given us, is all very well, Milverton, but does it not greatly consist of what the first Napoleon would have called "ideology?" How are you to dissuade warlike nations, or despotic sovereigns, from playing largely at soldiers?

*Milverton.* Of course we cannot hope at a bound to reform the world in this respect, but we may try to do something towards this reform, if only by stating the facts of the case clearly.

For instance, I venture to ask the simple question, whether there is any dynasty on earth that is worth maintaining at the cost of keeping up an army of five hundred thousand soldiers? I pause for a reply.

*Ellesmere.* You may pause.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Is not the whole social system worth keeping up at this price? You are going a great deal too fast.

*Milverton.* That is the regular argument, or rather the regular bugbear, that is brought up to justify every kind of maladministration. If a social system has in it any strength, worth, or vitality, it does not require huge standing armies

to maintain it. I admit that in most of the European nations there are dangerous classes, dangerous because uncared for and uneducated ; but surely there is no state in Europe in which an army of one hundred thousand soldiers could not keep down the dangerous classes, if the bulk of the people were reasonably well affected to the government.

*Ellesmere.* You disposed too lightly by far of one of the chief motives to war—namely, the desire to occupy a territory.

*Milverton.* At least I am sure that motive has faded away in the minds of individuals ; though, for mere political purposes, it may still be an inducement to monarchs.

Let us imagine ourselves in the olden time. I am a small vavasour living where I do now in Hampshire. There comes to me a great neighbouring baron. We will say Lord Palmerston, who lives at no great distance, and he says to me :—"Friend Milverton of Worth-Ashton, I have a noble enterprise for thee. Collect thy hinds together, and prepare them for battle. Henry, thy bailiff, will train them as warriors should be trained, and John, thy herdsman, will teach them to shoot with the bow. I see there are stately yew-trees hereabouts. Valiant Sir John of Bedford will join his bands with mine. We go to dispossess the Saracen. There we will give thee broad lands and wide domains instead of these few petty acres not worth looking after. Thou art not a stalwart man thyself ; but I have observed that thou canst give thy enemy a shrewd poke under the ribs when occasion offers, and that thou hast the wisdom to wait for the occasion. Valiant Sir John of Bedford is not lofty in stature, but he can give a shrewd blow to his enemies on all occasions.

"We take the blessing of the Church with us, for that has been promised to me by my good neighbour the Abbot of Romsey, on condition that we despoil Benjamin the Jew of Buckinghamshire of all his goods, and bestow a tenth

upon the Abbey. We will not fail to despoil him of his goods : that thou mayest reckon upon. The Abbot is a good man, and careth not for trifles such as hymns and processions and images " (the word low-church would not have been invented then).

And I, Leonard Milverton, should be asinine enough to go ; and when we had dispossessed the Saracen, valiant Sir John of Bedford and the Baron of Broadlands would quarrel over the spoil. I should take one side or the other, and be ruined in their wars ; or they would agree, and as I have always been an outspeaking man, I should be arraigned by both of them for contumacy. Any way I should soon be dispossessed of my lands.

But that is not the chief point. During the time that I possessed these lands taken from the Saracen, I should probably find out that I was no whit happier than I had been in Hampshire : that nuisances followed one everywhere, that I had become accustomed to home nuisances, but that I had to acquire the peculiar power of endurance necessary to bear the Saracen nuisances.

Now imagine the Baron of Broadlands coming and making the same proposition to me at this time of the world, and what answer should I make but the following :—" Baron of Broadlands, thou art a bold, shrewd, and stalwart man. I would not dissuade thee from any good work. Go thou with valiant Sir John of Bedford, and despoil the Jew of Buckinghamshire. Thou hast my blessing as well as that of the Abbot of Romsey ; but I go not. When I was younger, I served under Murray of Albemarle, and bore his red pennon through many beauteous lands, but none saw I that I liked better than my own. Thou talkest of the Saracens, and I call to mind the beautiful town of Seville. And the place is fair, is passing fair ; but when thou hast dispossessed the Saracens, there remain the mosquitoes. Go thou, therefore, with Sir John of Bedford, and when thou

hast conquered and dispossessed the Saracens, if thou abide there for ten years, and sendest word to me that the land of the Saracens is better than the manor of Broadlands, then will I come too. But now I am not minded to part from my swine."

Of course he never would send for me ; for, as I told you, aggression is not now undertaken with a view of occupation. Then why this idiotic maintenance of huge armies ?

*Ellesmere.* Ah, why indeed !

An odd idea has often struck me about an invasion of the French. Of course by some accident or other they might some day land a large body of troops in England. They would then proceed perhaps to occupy some large town. Sunday would come. Imagine fifty thousand of the lower class of Frenchmen contemplating an English Sunday. They are pleasant, handy little fellows those French common soldiers. They would commune with one another, and would say :—" If we were to conquer this country our rulers would make us occupy it. This English Sunday would then decimate our ranks by *ennui*." The next morning would see them in full retreat to the coast. Meanwhile the English of the great town would discover what handy little dogs the Frenchmen were, what cooks, what pleasant cheery fellows, and they would run after them, imploring them to stay. The worst blows would be exchanged while the French were endeavouring to get away from their hospitable entertainers. Ever after, when rattling their dominoes in their sunny *cafés*, these invading Frenchmen would tell their companions of the awful Sunday they had spent in England. "A good people, a kind people, those English," they would say, "but so dull, and such bad cooks, and no sun there. We will march with our Emperor anywhere but to England." By the way, whether it shone or not, they would swear there was no sun, for all foreigners believe we live for the most part in a fog ; and a good sound prejudice is not to be

contradicted by mere eyesight and observation : is it, Dunsford? You know your parish pretty well.

*Milverton.* Ellesmere's idea is a humorous one—I think we have heard it before from him ; but if the fifty thousand Frenchmen do come, not many of them will return, to tell about our English Sunday or anything else. But to resume the argument about the folly of conquest for the sake of occupation. I have taken an individual case ; but the argument may be fully maintained when applied to tribes and nations. Why, I ask, should the Allobroges desert their splendid Lyons to possess themselves of any other city ; or why should the Pannonians quit their pleasant Vienna to occupy any other metropolis in Europe? Or why should the Belgæ rush away from gay Brussels and that charming park of theirs to distant and nugatory conquests? Or why should the Quadi and the Marcomanni flee from imperial Prague to occupy any other spot upon the earth?

To come nearer home, if my neighbours of flourishing Southampton were to invite me to any scheme of conquest with a view to occupation, I should without hesitation thus reply :—" Brother Wessexians, for an excursion—a peaceful excursion, on a fine summer's day, with little or no roughness of sea (that last condition is indispensable), as far as the not distant island of Vectis,—I am your man ; but why should we quit our pleasant and thriving abode for untried regions? Did not Canute, properly called Knut, when he conquered us, read us a lesson rebuking all absurd presumption? No : let us continue to elect public-spirited Mr.—— for Mayor : let us improve the market-place (that really wants improving) ; let us increase and embellish our public gardens ; but let us budge not from where we are."

I hate, as you know, to press any argument beyond what it will bear ; and I must confess there is one town, the inhabitants of which might make a claim for foreign conquest which I should find it more difficult to resist. That

town is Mancunium, more commonly known by the name of Manchester. But the Mancunians are of all men the most disposed to peace. Their name has become a bye-word because they are said to require peace at any price. If the Mancunians are satisfied, for Heaven's sake do not let us put it into their heads that they could gain anything by change. I dare say they are wise in wishing to stay where they are ; and it becomes a case of *à fortiori* when applied to any other city on the face of the earth.

*Ellesmere.* I will admit that individuals are wiser than they were in these matters ; but what are called political complications are as numerous and as vexatious as ever. I can only repeat my question as to what should be the remedy—putting aside that which may arise from the gradual change in public opinion on war.

*Milverton.* Ellesmere asks me, what way there is out of all this difficulty, what out-look there is in any direction that should give any ground for hoping that this century will witness any diminution in the number of soldiers maintained throughout Europe ? In such cases I can only look for the coming of a great man to power, who, appreciating the just thoughts of the most thoughtful men of his age, and longing to spare his subjects, boldly commences a career of gradual disbandment. Such a man as King Leopold of Belgium I believe to have greatness enough in him to commence such a career, if he had been called to the head of any of the more powerful monarchies of Europe. You see what he has practically said to his people :—"I am ready to work for you and with you ; but if, upon due deliberation, you do not wish to have me for your king, I will go away from you."

*Mr. Midhurst.* There are few Leopolds of Belgium.

*Milverton.* Well, I am no courtier. What can any king or queen do for me ? They cannot make my trees grow. But I think that our own monarch would not wish to occupy



a throne where the dynasty was only to be supported by irrationally large armies, breaking down the public wealth.

Common people think that kings and queens have such a very happy, unworking life. Our Guelphs, whatever faults or demerits may be imputed to some of them, have, in the majority of instances, been exceedingly punctual and laborious persons in matters of business. I know this, that when I was a youth in a public office, however long, weighty, and elaborate a despatch was sent down to the king from the office, back used to come, almost always by return of post, a reply to the head of the department: and certainly the present occupant of the throne has rather exceeded than fallen short of her best predecessors in punctuality and despatch of business. Now such sovereigns might fairly say,—"We endeavour to do our duty in a very difficult position, and if you will not let us do it without an unreasonable sacrifice on your part by keeping up armies which afflict you, and are a burden on our conscience, you must find some other persons to do the work."

*Ellesmere.* There are, no doubt, some monarchs who might accept and act upon these rational views; but, my dear fellow, what are you to do with a man who thinks he has a mission for conquest, or rules over a nation of that spirit? There will always, as far as I can see, be such men and such nations. At any rate, there will always be men in great power and high place who love despotism.

*Milverton.* You will say it is but a vain imagination, but if one could imagine oneself the good genius, or the sage, who in a dream, as Eastern stories run, is permitted to stand by the bedside of a monarch, and to give him for once in his life wise and disinterested advice, one would say, "Sir: this fighting other kings' subjects, or depressing the life and energy of your own, is but a small endeavour, and, moreover, a very trite one. There is nothing new to be done in that way now. It would be something comparatively new

to try and make your subjects comfortable ; and, considering the perennial difficulties of human life, it would be about the hardest task you could encounter. But if benevolence is not your characteristic, and you must have that empty thing called fame, take at least an unusual route to obtain a singular renown. Nature lies before you, a country into which few private men or monarchs have made successful incursions. Take Ptolemy Philadelphus<sup>1</sup> for your pattern ; and see whether regal or imperial resources can avail to compel Nature to give up one more of her great secrets. In Astronomy, for instance, we have been satisfied for nearly two hundred years with a law which is perhaps but a corollary of a much wider law, that a further questioning of matter might discover.

“Our knowledge of all around us, from the hyssop that grows upon the wall to the remote nebulæ which are yet unresolved by human science, is but twilight knowledge. Let the ambition of your reign be to increase, in however small degree, the domains of learning and of science.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have since thought whether Milverton chose a good example or not, in naming Ptolemy Philadelphus, as that king certainly maintained huge armies and large fleets. But he seems to have used them chiefly for protection, and his reign is not signalised by any great war. In fostering science and learning he perhaps occupies the first place amongst monarchs. Indeed, these Ptolemies were a great race. What a fine saying that is of Ptolemy Soter, especially for his time—“That it was better to make rich than to be rich.”—[D.]

<sup>2</sup> A correspondent writes to me :—“There are peaceful victories to be won at less than the cost of one day’s warfare. Geology offers great conquests, astronomy grand exploits ; and some of the scientific problems which demand solution are hardly to be solved without imperial means and resources. If I wanted to indicate one of such problems I would ask—Is our knowledge of even the figure of our own planet at all satisfactory? We are told that ‘the northern and southern hemispheres are dissimilar.’ What is the

. "In this bewildering, puzzled, insecure, and blundering world, I will not pretend to you that anything is signally worth doing; but at any rate there is one thing which it is worth while *not* to do, and that is, to destroy your fellow-creatures, and their poor habitations, by fire and sword. That is neither a novel, wise, nor ingenious proceeding; whereas discovery in art or science, if it does not render men less miserable, is at least an employment which is not stamped with obvious absurdity and mischief."

*Ellesmere.* After this discourse the monarch would awake, would tell his courtiers that he had suffered from a particularly foolish and unpleasant dream, would call for the muster-rolls of his armies, and, like the elder Napoleon, declare that no girl could read a love-story with more intense interest than that with which he perused these interesting documents.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The new Emperor of Russia seems to be undertaking great things not in the least connected with conquest. This serf emancipation is perhaps the largest and the most difficult transaction at present going on in the world. The Czar seems quite in earnest, too, if we may judge by his speeches.<sup>1</sup>

case if we divide the globe by any imaginary line into eastern and western? Take the hemisphere which extends from 90° East long. to 90° West, what experiments for ascertaining the real figure of the earth have been made—what establishments for the furtherance of astronomical science exist in that half of the globe?"

<sup>1</sup> The following are extracts from the speeches to which Mr. Midhurst alluded:—" 'I am always happy at being able to thank the nobility' (this was at Moscow); . . . . 'to my regret, I cannot this day thank you. You may remember,' he said, 'two years ago in this hall I spoke to you of the necessity of proceeding, sooner or later, to the reform of those laws which regulate servitude—a reform that must come from above that it may not come from below. My words have been ill understood. . . . .

*Milverton.* Yes: the Emperor of Russia seems to be entering upon an excellent and an original career. Heaven grant that he may have the force of mind to persevere in it: for there are always huge difficulties in the way of a reforming monarch, and plenty of people about him to say, on critical occasions, "The old way, Sire, was the best, and certainly the safest for you."

But to speak of despotism generally. I must say, I cannot understand an ambition which is limited to the present life, which says to itself, "Pleasant pastures and wavy crops of corn, and beautiful cities, and noble highways, and rivers kept within their bounds,—all flourishing in my time, and

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I have fixed for you the bases of reform, and I never will swerve from them.'

"The address at Nijni-Novgorod is a mixture of caress and scolding, that indicates the existence of two opposing and nearly equal parties in that government. 'I rejoice in expressing my personal gratitude for the patriotism of the nobility of Nijni-Novgorod. . . . I thank you for being the first to respond to my call in that weighty affair of the amelioration in the position of the peasantry. . . . It belongs to you to balance public with private interests in this weighty affair. But I hear with regret of a spirit of selfishness having sprung up among you. Selfishness is the destruction of all things. It is a pity such should be the case. Away with your egotism! I trust in you. I trust there will be no more of these selfish views. . . . Gentlemen, act well for yourselves, and not badly for others. . . . I trust you.' In Kostroma, which he calls the home of his family, the Emperor is very gracious. 'The reception you gave me yesterday deeply affected my heart. I thank you for your willingness to meet my views as to the amelioration in the position of the peasantry. This question—a question all important for the future development of Russia—I bear upon my heart. . . . I hope you will settle the affair with the Divine assistance, and without injury either to yourselves or the peasantry.'"—*The British Quarterly Review*, January 1859.

mostly created by me :—and after me the deluge.” So, too, it is but a small thing for a prince or other governor to govern men rigidly, even with great present advantage to themselves, during the short span of any man’s power, compared with what it would be to leave them, when his life should end, more governable and more assuredly self-governed.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I can hardly express to you how much I delight in the views you have just expressed, and how entirely I coincide with them. I have been a man in authority—early in authority :—and if ever there was a man who was by nature superlatively fond of governing, and not merely of governing but of managing minutely and reforming, I am that unfortunate individual. I never look into anything, but I see some part of it which might, to my fancy, be improved and made to work better. Such a nature is prone to be very meddlesome, and to keep all people who are in any way under its sway as much in leading-strings as possible. But what little intellect and powers of observation I have, tended to keep this meddling disposition in order ; and I always said to myself, “ What is the good, comparatively speaking, of my getting work well done, if I am always to be by, to see it done, and to have a hand in it ? I want to have my underlings grow up equal or superior to myself, and that will never be the case if I teach them in such a manner only as to keep them always in a slavish mental dependency.”

*Milverton.* I can return the compliment, and say how much I agree with you. In my little way I have had a great deal of work to direct, and I have always aimed at three things in this direction : first, to teach those under me to do the work with all the aids, handiness, and adroitness that experience gives the older or the more practised man ; then, if I could, to put into their minds the germinating idea of the work. This seems a rather over-fine phrase,

but there is such a thing as a leading and germinating idea in most kinds of work that is worth doing at all. Lastly, I have sought to impress them with a sense of responsibility about the work. These three objects accomplished, I leave the workmen alone for the most part. It has happened to me sometimes, and I dare say it has often happened to you, Mr. Midhurst, to find that these people, whom one has endeavoured to train, have come and said, "You never go through our work now, whereas you used to be so particular about every step: I wish you would examine more carefully what we have now done."—"Thank you," I have replied, "but I have done with teaching and training. You know enough to walk by yourselves, and only want self-confidence. And I only want to see results, and to examine them."

*Ellesmere.* I quite approve of all you have been saying, but I wish to take you both down a peg or two in your own estimation of yourselves. Though you are both very hard-working men, you are at the same time indolent and not inclined to do a bit more work than is necessary. (I know at least that such is the case with Milverton, and I conjecture it is so with Mr. Midhurst.)

But I should like to bring forward another point. Any stranger who had come in during the last few minutes, would have supposed, Milverton, that you were a man who abhorred over-much government; and yet, occasionally, you claim an action for government in matters where it seldom enters now, or only just sufficiently to dip its feet delicately and produce a muddiness in the water.

*Milverton.* Now, my dear friend——

*Ellesmere.* Don't be cross, Milverton. Whenever a man begins with "my dear friend," pronounced in a somewhat querulous tone, something savage and especially unfriendly is coming.

*Milverton.* Well, my dear plague, have I not explained at least one hundred times in your presence, that I never

want to introduce government action except when individual action is impossible, or at least utterly inadequate? Have I not often quoted the man in Aristophanes who wished to make a separate peace with a hostile nation for himself and his family? We see the absurdity of that; but we do not see that there are many things in social life which it would be just as absurd for an individual to attempt. You cannot by your own exertions secure unadulterated food, and it is not worth doing to have the streets swept and watered only before your own doors.

How I wish that Mr. John Stuart Mill, or some other accurate definer and divider, would point out and classify, in somewhat minute detail, what things may be left to individual action in a community, and what things must be left to government to do, if they are to be done at all.

*Ellesmere.* I wish the government would undertake to provide men in armour to bat at cricket, for the present practice of flinging the ball at you with catapultic force, which master Walter has adopted, has been the cause of my receiving such a blow this morning that I am rather stupefied, and am unable to maintain my part adequately in this discussion.

*Milverton.* That is the way, Mr. Midhurst, that Ellesmere gets off—by the aid of a joke and a sneer—when he is beaten; but I think we have said enough to fortify our position, and that he will not in a hurry attack us again on these points.

We have rather wandered away from our original subject, and before the conversation ends, I must enumerate the points which I have dwelt upon in what Ellesmere calls my “speech” to you—that armies irrationally large are maintained in Europe—that the people are greatly overburdened with taxes in order to support those armies—that it would be well that we men of Europe should, from time to time, ask the reason for the maintenance of these armies,

and that those amongst us who possess any power of thought and expression should endeavour to guide public opinion into a wise state with regard to the maintenance of those armies, having a belief in the ultimate effect of that opinion, and a hope that individuals in great station may perceive what are now the highest forms of ambition for them—viz., not conquest for extension of empire, for glory, or for the triumph of any one set of opinions, but domestic improvement in their own states, and the gradual development of freedom throughout their dominions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The reader must have noticed how little part I [Dunsford] mostly take in these conversations. The truth is, I am such an unready person, that my thoughts come too late. I suppose this arises from my having lived so much out of the world. I think I know as much as Ellesmere or Milverton, but they seem not only to have all their wits about them, but all their knowledge, whereas mine has to be excavated.

I mentioned the above as an excuse for subjoining one or two remarks upon war which occurred to me while we were walking home. They were chiefly reminiscences from one of Granville Sharp's *Essays*. He quotes a passage from Howard, the Philanthropist, in which that good man, writing from Moscow, says, "No less than 70,000 recruits for the army and navy have died in the Russian hospitals during a single year."

Sharp then notices the fact that despotism destroys its millions silently; while sedition is noisy and tumultuous, and is always dreaded and detested.

"There are few riots," he adds, "without some grievance." "Jupiter," says Lucian, seldom has recourse to his thunder but "when he is in the wrong;" and, at the close of a long military life, Monsieur de Vendôme owned that, "in the eternal disputes between the mules and the muleteers, the mules were generally in the right."

How well this would have come in at that point of the conversation where Milverton asked, as I thought most pertinently, whether there is any dynasty on earth that is worth maintaining at the cost of keeping up an army of 500,000 soldiers?



I think I could have added greatly to Milverton's catalogue of the miseries that have been occasioned by war. He did not even touch upon the ravages of the Northmen, or of the Ottomans, or of the great native princes of India.

I should like also to have quoted some passages from the celebrated 29th bulletin of Napoleon, issued during his Russian campaign, such as the following :—

“The cold, which began on the 7th, suddenly increased; and on the 14th, 15th, and 16th, the thermometer was sixteen and eighteen degrees below the freezing point.

“The roads were covered with ice; the cavalry, artillery, and baggage horses perished every night, not only by hundreds, but by thousands, particularly the German and French horses.

“In a few days more than 30,000 horses perished; our cavalry were on foot; our artillery and our baggage were without conveyance. It was necessary to abandon and destroy a good part of our cannon, ammunition, and provisions.

“This army, so fine on the 6th, was very different on the 14th, —almost without cavalry, without artillery, and without transports.

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“This difficulty, joined to a cold which suddenly came on, rendered our situation miserable. Those men whom nature had not sufficiently steeled to be above all the chances of fate and fortune, appeared shaken, lost their gaiety, their good humour, and dreamed but of misfortunes and catastrophes; those whom she had created superior to everything, preserved their gaiety and their ordinary manners, and saw fresh glory in the different difficulties to be surmounted.”—*Original Journals of the Eighteen Campaigns of Napoleon Buonaparte*, vol. ii. p. 320. London. No date.

Nothing is said in this remarkable bulletin about the loss of men; the full truth is told about the *horses*; but that is quite enough information for any intelligent person.—[D.]

## CHAPTER III.

## A LOVE STORY.

"O Love unconquered in fight," as the Greek poet says, who would have thought that I should have to meddle any more with your affairs! I could not, however, see all these young people running into peril without attempting to guide or save them. It is evident to me that Ellesmere loves Mildred, but I do not think he will ever disclose his love. I doubt whether she loves him, and I suspect that her affections are, or have been, set upon another. I am uncomfortable too about Blanche, and it will be a terrible thing if, as sometimes happens, the two sisters should love the same man.

Having these thoughts in my mind, I resolved to have a walk with Mildred, and to see whether I could come to some explanation with her. Both of the girls are very loving to me, and often call me their uncle, though I am no relative whatever of theirs.

Accordingly, I managed to walk alone with Mildred amidst those unguarded orchards which are to be found for miles together by the side of this beautiful river Rhine. I am the most stupid man in the world in any matter of a diplomatic kind, and though I had prepared six or

eight different ways of bringing about the subject naturally, none of them would come to hand when I wanted them. I was obliged to begin abruptly, with no other introduction than that of having previously admired a beautiful plum-tree. The transition was a bold one, but what is to be done when a man has no skill in the delicate diplomacy of conversation? I sighed and said :—

“What a thing love is, and what a pity it is that all the qualities which might help a woman or a man in any other affair in life, seem to have no influence in this, the greatest; where wisdom, forethought, and resolve appear to have no room for any action whatever.” “Then you too, dear uncle, have not altogether escaped this madness,” Mildred exclaimed! “What a happy woman she would have been, the woman that you loved! except that she would have had too much of her own way, and we women like to battle a little, or manœuvre for our influence.” A bright thought struck me, which in my previous cogitations had never come into my mind,—that I would tell her my own story, never hitherto told to any one, and that I should thus be able tacitly to moralise on hers. Yes, my dear, I replied, I have been in love, and indeed I am so still. You may smile, Mildred, but such is the truth; and as it may do you some good to hear my story, I will tell it.

“Her name was Alice.”

“Ah, the same as my mother’s.”

Yes it was, and we were brought up together. She was fourteen when I was seventeen, and I loved her more year after year, as the years went on, almost without knowing what love is. I went to college. Now you will be surprised to learn that I was not naturally a student. Passionately fond of music, doating upon poetry, I made my own little sonnets in those days, as we boys all did, and was a devoted

lover of nature and of art, but not at all a student. I cannot imagine any youth to whom it could have been a greater suffering to immure himself in study than it was to me. But I did it. I found out that I loved Alice, that the only chance of winning her was to obtain what is called some success in life, and I resolved to succeed. Always reverence a scholar, my dear, if not for the scholarship, at least for the suffering and the self-denial which have been endured to gain the scholar's proficiency. Fond as I have told you I was of music, I laid it aside during my college life, and never once permitted myself to go to a musical party. As for poetry, I carefully kept away from it, as if it were some evil thing. The slight recreation of looking at newspapers and reviews I permitted to myself; and well can I remember the stern restraint I exercised on meeting by chance with extracts from modern poetical works, which I would not allow myself to read until the day after I had taken my degree. I can see that you often pity Milverton for his unremitting labour. Now I should be the last man to depreciate the labours of any friend, still less of Milverton, but they cannot be compared with those of a very weary solitary scholar. In the one case the stimulus is immediate: the result comes quickly. An article is prepared, a speech delivered, a report drawn up, a book written; and there is immediate action on the world, or there seems to be. Opposition only serves to increase ardour, and success or failure alike promote new endeavours. Not so with the solitary student. His aims are far off, and the results to him — But no more of this.

My only pleasure was in correspondence with your——, with my Alice; and our letters, though of the tamest description, in which there was more talk of conic sections than of love, were an inexpressible comfort to me.

I succeeded. I became nearly the first man of my year in both of the great subjects of examination. I might now

come home with some hope at least of having made a beginning of fortune.

I dare say, my dear, you would like to know what Alice was like. No love story is complete without such a description of the heroine. Well, there is a picture in Paris, at the palace of the Luxembourg, called *Les illusions perdues*. A noble figure of a man, in the prime of life, or rather beyond the prime of life, when the leaf is just beginning to turn yellow at the edges, is sitting on a marble quay. His head bends forward, his arms fall down, in utter dejection. It is sunset. A barque is putting off from the quay; and the barque is crowded with gay minstrels, happy children, and bright-eyed damsels—

“Youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm.”

Nobody regards him—the dejected man. Nor does he look at them. He has just glanced at them. They are not, however, in his thoughts; but they have brought back, in long array, what Tennyson calls

“Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.”

It is to my mind one of the most affecting pictures I have ever seen. But that is not its peculiar merit in my eyes. One of the girls in the centre of the boat, who is leaning her head upon her hand and looking upwards, is the image of what my Alice was.

The chief thing I had to look forward to in this journey we are making was, that we might return by way of Paris, and that I might see that picture again. You must contrive that we do return that way. Ellesmere will do anything to please you, and Milverton is always perfectly indifferent as to where he goes, so that he is not asked to see works of art, or to accompany a party of sight-seers to a cathedral. We will go and see this picture together once; and once I must see it alone.

I returned home from college, as I said, and found Alice as loving as ever. We walked together and we talked together, and she was never tired of questioning me about my struggles, the rivals I had overcome and the pleasures I had resisted ; but I had not the courage to tell her that it was for her dear sake I had fought the battle.

Presently there came to our quiet house a young soldier. His Christian name was Henry. "Why, that was my father's," Mildred exclaimed. He was a nephew of Alice's father, and the two cousins walked together, and rode together, for Alice had to show Henry the beautiful country where we lived. I had not been on horseback for many years, and did not like to show my awkwardness as a beginner in the presence of her whom I loved. It was a very pleasant time. I began to love Henry as a brother, and the more so from the contrast of our two characters. He was a frank, bold, fearless, careless, gay young man. One day he went over to see some old companions who were quartered in the neighbouring town. Alice and I were alone again, and we walked out together in the evening. We spoke of my future hopes and prospects. I remember that I was emboldened to press her arm. She returned the pressure, and for a moment there never was, perhaps, a happier man. Had I known more of love, I should have known that this evident return of affection was anything but a good sign ; "and," continued she, in the unconnected manner that you women sometimes speak, "I am so glad that you love dear Henry. Oh, if we could but come and live near you when you get a curacy, how happy we should all be." This short sentence was sufficient. There was no need of more explanation. I knew all that had happened, and felt as if I no longer trod upon the firm earth, for it seemed a quicksand under me.

The agony of that dull evening, the misery of that long night ! I have sometimes thought that unsuccessful love

is almost too great a burden to be put upon such a poor creature as man. But He knows best ; and it must have been intended, for it is so common.

The next day I remember I borrowed Henry's horse, and rode madly about, bounding through woods (I who had long forgotten to ride) and galloping over open downs. If the animal had not been wiser and more sane than I was, we should have been dashed to pieces many times. And so by sheer exhaustion of body I deadened the misery of my mind, and looked upon their happy state with a kind of stupefaction. In a few days I found a pretext for quitting my home, and I never saw your mother again ; for it was your mother, Mildred, and you are not like her, but like your father, and still I love you. But the great wound has never been healed. It is a foolish thing, perhaps, that any man should so doat upon a woman that he should never afterwards care for any other, but so it has been with me ; and you cannot wonder that a sort of terror should come over me when I see anybody in love, and when I think that his or her love is not likely to be returned. And now, Mildred, I come to what was the purpose of my telling you this story,—to express to you my hope that you are not in my plight, and to ask you frankly, whether you are not in danger of loving Milverton ?

*Mildred.* Not now : not in any danger. I will tell you what saved me. I had for a long time been struggling against the feelings that were besetting my heart in favour of my cousin, not only from the natural pride of women, but also for the sake of another who perhaps even then loved him much better, and would be less able to control her love. You can easily divine whom I mean. Indeed, I see you have already divined it.

You recollect the serious illness that my cousin Milverton had last year. You remember how anxious we were all about him. He was attended by the great doctor A——.

We were not living in the house with my cousin, but used to leave him the last thing at night, and come again the first thing in the morning.

Upon arriving at the house early one morning, I found, both from the report of the nurse and of his servant, that he had passed a worse night than usual, and that some symptoms of a dangerous character were aggravated. Words cannot tell the anxiety with which I waited the arrival of Dr. A——. At last the doctor came. Dr. A——, besides being one of the most eminent physicians of the day, is a great scholar, and a great practical chemist. In this last-mentioned capacity he was especially welcome to my cousin, who was then deeply engaged in some researches which needed the aid of chemistry. Long and frequent used to be the discussions between himself and the doctor upon certain vexed points.

I sat on the stairs, waiting in direful suspense for the doctor to come out. A quarter of an hour passed, half an hour, three quarters of an hour. I augured the worst from the long visit of the doctor. At last he came out of the sick man's room with a happy expression on his countenance, though a very thoughtful one. I rushed up two or three steps to meet him. "It is good news," I exclaimed. "I think we shall do it, I really do think we shall do it," he replied. "It will be one of the most useful discoveries of modern times, and will immortalise us both. But you girls do not care for these things." "But your patient?" I said rather peevishly,— "Is he better? Is it a crisis that has passed? Do you know that he was very ill all last night, and that they thought of sending for you?" A sudden expression of dismay came over the old man's face, and he absolutely blushed. "Good heavens, I did not think of asking him how he was; I never was so ashamed of myself in my life. We began talking of this confounded invention of ours. I told him what I had done, he told me what he had thought, and——but I



must go back into the room," and away hurried the doctor back into the patient's room.

I took up my station again on the stairs. This time it was not with a radiant face that the doctor re-appeared, but with an unmistakable air of vexation and mortification on his countenance. "I have been very remiss," he said. "Get this made up directly, and I will be back again in a few hours." In the course of the day my cousin grew worse, and the crisis of the disorder really did come on in twenty-four hours' time. It ended, however, as you know, most favourably, and he was cured.

And so was I: for I thought to myself, here is a man not at all indifferent to pain, but on the contrary, exquisitely sensitive to it, as most men of his kind are, and yet so absorbed is he in his plans and projects that he can forget to take even the most ordinary care of himself. Such a man will never love any woman deeply, at least, as I should like to be loved. With a more devoted person, like my sister Blanche for instance, it might be otherwise.

*Dunsford.* I really think you came to a most harsh and unjustifiable conclusion, my dear; but I am glad you came to it. Forgive me for saying so, but you never could have loved, Mildred.

*Mildred.* Perhaps so. Indeed, I am not sure that there is not too much sympathy between my cousin and myself for love. The sympathy between us is still intense; and I would forego almost any earthly pleasure to further his purposes, when I am under the full influence of his quiet enthusiasm for them. I would willingly remain unmarried to be of any use or comfort to him, but I could not be married to him. And now, father Confessor, I have finished my confession to you.

We walked home silently amidst the mellow orchards, glowing ruddily in the rays of the setting sun.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CRITICISM.

I ALMOST begin to believe the common saying, that any woman may marry any man she pleases; that is, provided she sees him frequently, and that he knows that she does love him.

After my conversation with Mildred, I made up my mind to tell Milverton what I had perceived about Blanche with regard to himself. He was at first greatly distressed and vexed. "Pray don't say so," he exclaimed: "surely you are only jesting; but then," he added, "you are not the man to jest about these things." Then he took comfort in declaring that I could know nothing about such matters as love. (How little our nearest and dearest friends know about us!) How should I know anything? I really had got into the fanciful ways of some of the old maids of my parish. Milverton was never so rude to me in his life before: but the conversation ended by his protesting that if I were right, the thing must be put a stop to—that the idea of a young and beautiful girl throwing her affections away upon a faded widower, like himself, was absurd. Was she not admired by so and so, and so and so, dash-

ing young guardsmen, who were fitted for her? and there was that young Hartley, who owned half the county, why could not he take a fancy to her and she to him—an excellent young fellow who was always coming to consult him about model-cottages. How obtuse in such matters we all are! I had long seen that Hartley came for a model-wife, and with that purpose was endeavouring to win all possible favour with Milverton; and I had also seen that Blanche steadily avoided Mr. Hartley. His last words to me were, “I will prove to you that your ideas in this matter are as absurd as Miss Crump’s (the arch-gossip in our village) were on a certain occasion about yourself;” and then he quoted a bit from *Philip Van Artevelde*:—

“The world, when men and women meet,  
Is rich in sage remark, nor stints to strew  
With roses and with myrtle fields of death.”

To which I replied, “But after all the world was right, for Philip Van Artevelde did love Elena.”

By and by, however, as the days wore on, I could not help noticing that Milverton’s investigations, whatever was the nature of them, did not seem to lead to “a stop being put to it.” On the contrary, he began to be more attentive to her; asked her opinion upon matters which she could not possibly understand; and one day, after returning from a long walk with her, which I hoped would lead to something decisive, he told us that Blanche had a great deal more in her than most people supposed, and that she was becoming an excellent companion. Mildred

and I secretly wondered how Blanche contrived to put in the yeses and the noes in the right places; for we were sure she did not venture farther out of her depth than an occasional affirmative or negative; but still she was, no doubt, a very agreeable companion.

We continued our wanderings, without there being much on my part to chronicle. One conversation, however, I took notes of. It was at that unrivalled town, Nuremberg—the only town, perhaps, in Europe where there is a thorough harmony in the buildings, and where even the modern parts seem to have grown up in reverent resemblance to the ancient, as if lath and plaster and composition, dominant enough elsewhere, were things unknown to the Nurembergers. We were all sitting on a height just above Albert Dürer's house, near the fortress, whence you can see the wide expanse of surrounding country.

We talked of Albert Dürer and his tiresome wife, and of works of art, and the criticisms upon them, until we found ourselves in a discussion on criticism generally. Milverton made some remarks which I could not remember at the time, but which he afterwards, at my request, furnished me with in writing.

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COMPARATIVELY easy would be the work of criticising, and comparatively small the mischief done by injudicious critics, if it were finished works alone that were chiefly subjected to criticism. There

are some few things in life that appear to be complete, and so far fit for criticism, such as a picture, a book, a statue, a form of government, or an action of which you know all the actors (how rare, by the way, this is!), and the times, places, and circumstances of the action.

But the greater part of what is brought before you in the course of the day is incomplete and continuous. You cannot get round it, you cannot look at it as a whole, or weigh it in its completeness. Take any continuous transaction at some point of its continuity,—and what do you know about it? It requires the highest calculi of the mathematician to discover from a small portion of a curve submitted to him the law and the nature of the curve. Mr. Babbage's calculating machine, after grinding out numbers which apparently proceed according to a certain order, suddenly produces a number, or numbers, of another order, though there is no change in the machine, or in the setting of it.

The above instances are connected with inanimate matter: the difficulty is complicated beyond measure when life enters into it. A piece of spider filament gives you but a small idea of the web which is to follow; and the insect *larva* yields but a slight indication, and that only to the scientific mind, of the perfected *imago* which is eventually to break into being.

Again, and carrying the argument farther, when you rise from insects up to men, and attempt to criticise their proceedings, you must remember that the doer is not always good at explanation. Even when he can explain,

perhaps he has no time to do so ; and besides, when he can explain and has time, he may be prevented from explaining by discretion, by reserve, or by the impossibility of telling all the story. I have always thought that the most foolish men would have a great deal to say in behalf of their folly if they could tell us all of it. Be that as it may, at any rate we must beware of criticising the half-effaced, the continuous, the incomplete, as if it were a rounded and visible whole. The most inane of critics have some dim idea of this when they go into an artist's studio, and make remarks upon unfinished works. Even they cannot help saying, " But perhaps this thing, which I object to, will have a different appearance when you have finished the picture." Now, it is not often we are admitted to see a picture so unfinished as the character of any great man remains in history ; or indeed, as unfinished as the character of any living man should appear to us, considering the rough and careless way in which we mostly come to conclusions upon it.

That part of criticism which consists of comments upon the conduct of others, is where critics and commentators are most likely to be utterly deceived. You do not want much converse with a man to be able to judge pretty fairly about his behaviour. A man of fine manners is discerned at once to be a man of fine manners. You do not want to hear a man tell more than two or three anecdotes in order to decide whether he is a good narrator. One touch of humorousness betrays " a fellow of infinite

humour." A bore seldom ceases to be a bore in any half-hour's conversation. Sitting but once with a man in a committee, or on a council, may enable you to discover whether he is a just person or not. But when you come to decide upon a man's conduct, there is often some little circumstance or other, which, if once known to you, would change the whole current of your thought about him, and cause you to start back with horror at the rash judgments you have been pronouncing upon him. You suppose him to be mean, and he is very poor,—a poverty caused by undiscovered generosity. A case of that kind came to my knowledge only three weeks ago. A friend of mine came to me, and, with penitence, confessed to me how he had misjudged another friend, whom he had been condemning in conversations with me for years. "I have long ridiculed that man," he said, "for his extreme parsimony, and I now find that he is penniless, having made the most generous efforts to save another friend from ruin." One such instance as that—and a man of much worldly experience could probably tell us of dozens—should make us cautious of pronouncing any judgment that we are not obliged to pronounce upon men's conduct. It is a curious thing, but if you had asked me as regards the instance I have just quoted, whether the man unjustly condemned by his friend was a generous person or not, I should have said at once that he was, as he had a generous look, and a generous manner: but there was no standing up against the instances brought forward of a ludicrous and unkind parsimony on his part.

Yet, note the real and lofty generosity in never explaining why he could not subscribe to this or to that. Depend upon it we are mostly doing a long-sighted as well as a kind thing when we decline to pronounce upon other men's conduct, and when we endeavour to reserve our judgment, let appearances be ever so greatly against them.

In discussing criticism, I think that there is one circumstance for which there is hardly ever sufficient allowance made on behalf of the thing or the person criticised. The comments are made at leisure, after due deliberation, without much pressure of responsibility, upon things which were done in a hurry, at a moment of fatigue, amidst the pressure of other business, and when a resolve of some kind had to be taken at the instant. Consider, for instance, the office of a minister of State. There are, perhaps, 30 or 40 letters to be written by the minister, conveying determinations of some importance, in the course of a single day. The same pressure occurs in a merchant's business, or in the daily labour of any professional man. One out of many hundreds of such transactions comes to light, perhaps in an unfavourable manner : and those who choose to comment upon it, do so at their leisure, with plenty of deliberation, and often with some knowledge of what has been the result of the transaction they criticise. They are apt to forget that the person criticised was placed in very different circumstances from themselves ; and it requires a great exercise of their



imagination to throw themselves into his position before they begin to comment.

Mr. Emerson, I think, has observed how mean, trivial, and ludicrous the details of most lawsuits appear when they are brought into the full light of discussion in open court. A similar remark may be made as regards all transactions that come within the glare of extreme publicity. Human affairs are not conducted in such a way as to bear this publicity. And if it were to be general, men would feel like bees working in a glass hive (only the bees have no newspapers, nor are subject to any comment which they can understand); and, indeed, a more alarming simile might be adopted, for the casual transactions of even unimportant men are sometimes exposed to a magnifying power like that of the solar microscope, which can make a small insect appear a hideous monster.

It is for the above reasons, and for others like them, that the press should be very careful to restrict itself within due limits in commenting upon transactions of a thoroughly private character. Otherwise great cruelty may be heedlessly committed. Some unfortunate individual, from hurry, thoughtlessness, or over-softness of disposition, confides in a very foolish manner, and is egregiously imposed upon. It may be fair that some punishment should come for this, but not such a punishment as being commented upon, and held up to ridicule before the eyes of hundreds of thousands of readers, as happens if the transaction is made the subject

of a leading article in a leading journal. Surely, that censorship of the press which is, perhaps, the only censorship possible in our time and country, the censorship of discretion and kindness in a really able editor, should be exercised on such an occasion; and, at the risk of omitting an amusing article now and then, an editor should severely confine his writers to commenting upon what is justly and fitly public, not that which is accidentally public. Of course the slightest exercise of Christianity would induce an editor to think how little he would like himself, if he had committed some small blunder or indiscretion, or even some crime, to have it magnified and lectured about in the manner in which a bee's-wing is exhibited by the aid of the solar microscope before referred to, and all its minutiae commented upon by a fluent, popular lecturer. We do not find, moreover, that severe critics, when their turn comes to have their shadow set dancing on the white sheet in the lecture-room, have attained that extreme indifference to concentrated solar light and scientific commenting, which should make them unable to imagine what are the sensations of other men when exhibited to the staring public in this remorseless fashion.

There is another consideration which, if kept well in mind, would infuse a higher tone into criticism, than, I think, it has ever had, and which would assuredly inspire it with some generosity. It is this: that, for the most part, there can be no reply. You criticise the dead—"the silent ones" as they have well been called,—what

need I say more on their part? You criticise the absent; and, unless the proverbs of the world have much belied the world, the absent find but few defenders. You criticise the lofty and the powerful; and for them to reply would certainly be a lowering of themselves, and a task which they can seldom undertake. The soot-bearer jostles against the wearer of the silken gown: the wearer of the silken gown cannot retaliate in kind. An eminent person is always at the mercy of the scurrilous. Again, you criticise the busy; and, as I said before, they have no time to answer you. You criticise those who are involved with others in long and difficult transactions, and they cannot reply without the consent of those others, or without revealing what they ought not to reveal. They must bear whatever blows you are pleased to inflict upon them. You criticise the great man, or the great work, and it is not in the nature of him, or it, to furnish any answer to you. It stands out as a stern fact, as a lighthouse on a stormy coast, and must endure the buffets of the waves without any attempt at retaliation.

In making these remarks upon criticism one can have no fear of unreasonably diminishing it. There will always be enough criticism in a refined and civilised world. What a great part it does perform is known to all men. What a still greater it might perform is appreciated by those who would have it blended with knowledge, governed by self-restraint, and enlightened by charity. Every day its functions become more ample, because in

this varied world there are so many subjects which not even the highest and most laborious intellect can know anything about from direct information, and as regards which it must be content to gain its opinions from others who are supposed to be peculiarly instructed. It is especially to be noticed, that in giving summaries of works, or transactions, lies the most pregnant and most important part of criticism ; and this work, which is in fact historical writing, will be admitted by every one who has tried to accomplish it, to require a great amount of skill, impartiality, and judgment. The critic who brings these qualities to bear upon the ordinary transactions of life—the daily critic in a newspaper for instance—is a large benefactor of mankind, and really saves the world an immensity of trouble. To elevate the function of criticism, to restrain it within due limits, but not to carp at it, or depreciate it, is the object which I have had in addressing these few remarks to the accomplished circle of critics whom I see around me.

All that has been said above of criticism and of comment applies with still more force to meddling, which is often but bad criticism developed into injudicious action.

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Ellesmere admitted that criticism was very bad, but maintained that it was good enough in general for the works criticised. From this point I think I can give the conversation pretty accurately.

*Milverton.* I am thinking more of the critics themselves than of the works of the people they criticise. I suspect that the habit of criticising destroys productive energy in the man who gives himself up to criticising ; and I believe that even a bad motive for criticising is perhaps less injurious to the mental powers than the habit of looking out always, as you read or observe, for what you shall say about it. In the one case a man does a base thing, but not irremediable as regards himself. He says to himself, "I hate this other man, and I will write him down : " but when he gets into the habit of shallow unthinking criticism, he says to himself, "Lo ! I know this matter, and all other matters, and I can talk or write wisely about them on the shortest possible notice"—whereas he knows nothing—poor man !

*Dunsford.* Well, I am always very angry when I see a learned work, which I know must have cost the author years of labour and research, discussed in the most flippant manner, perhaps a few days after it has appeared.

*Milverton.* Yes : it is vexatious that the worst critics generally speak out first, and forestall the market of opinion. But as is natural with you, Dunsford, when one talks of criticism, your imagination always flies to the criticism on books, which is really a small and unimportant part of criticism. Even the criticisms on public men and public measures, often unjust enough, Heaven knows, are but a small and insignificant part of criticism, taken generally. It is the daily criticism, household criticism, if I may so call it, that is so important ; and that might, for the most part be so beneficially abridged. Human motives are so difficult to get at : we know so little about each other, that the endless comment which goes on must be irrelevant. There may be too much even of the most innocent comment ; and I think I have observed that all the higher natures are much averse from commenting upon others' character or

conduct, and that this aversion grows stronger as they grow older and wiser.

*Ellesmere.* You would delight, Milverton, in a story which Lord John Russell has told once or twice in the House of Commons, about the great Condé and Cardinal de Retz. Condé comes in and finds the Cardinal's table covered with pamphlets on both sides, making the vilest accusations against both sides. The Cardinal enters: the Prince points to the pamphlets and says, "These wretches think that we do all that they would do if they were in our places."

*Milverton.* Well, I want to revert to my first point, namely, the non-productiveness of those who get into the habit of over-criticising; and for an example, I shall bring you down from cardinals and princes to very humble people. There are two farmers in my neighbourhood. One is an excellent critic, and the other a very good farmer. Farmer Wilkins is the critic, farmer Hodge the good farmer. There was lately a piece of land to be let, or sold, close to me. Wilkins was profound in his criticisms upon it. "It had always been rated very low in the parish books. He had heard his father say, no man could get a living from it. If it were worth anything why was it to be let or sold now?" He was great in detail. "He had counted twenty-seven docks in one square yard of it. It might be next to a road, but that road led to nowhere." And so he went on. I began to feel a great contempt for this unfortunate bit of land. The next day I saw farmer Hodge upon it, and I resolved to hear what he had to say. He took up a bit of the earth, and he crumbled it in his hand, and looked about him vaguely, and then he said:—"It be out of heart, sure-ly, but not worse than my bit at Dragmire. I do think I'll take to 'un, and see what can be done." This was three or four years ago. You should see now the rich waving crops that there are; but farmer Wilkins goes on criticising with his accustomed ability, and almost proves to me, with the

crops before my eyes, that the whole thing is a failure. You know great critics never retract their sentences of condemnation.

*Ellesmere.* These farmers are mythical. In this benign assembly I am always set down as the critic. It is farmer Ellesmere and farmer Milverton that are really spoken of; and I, for one, shall believe in farmer Milverton's waving crops when I see them, and not one moment before. Besides, if I see the grain crops, I shall be incredulous as to turnips; and turnips are the soul of good husbandry, as people tell me.

*Milverton.* Well, then, you shall have a story about two old ladies—oh no, not old ladies, but spinsters of a certain age, who live in Dunsford's parish. They are Miss Strachey and Miss Hartopp. Miss Strachey is the busy, benevolent person of the parish; and without her I am sure I do not know what the poor would do for soup and flannel and many other little commodities. In this case the doer and the critic are great friends. Miss Hartopp sits in her chair all day long, reads many books, is dimly suspected of knowledge in political economy, but is victimised, like the rest of us, by Miss Strachey. However, the good lady,—I mean the victimised one,—has her pleasure in proving that everything her friend does is wrong, and must lead to bad consequences. "You really should speak to her, Mr. Milverton, and prove to her that this selling of flannel below the cost price is quite out of all principle."

Accordingly, with the greatest gravity, I call upon Miss Strachey, and prove to her, quoting largely from Adam Smith, Mill, Ricardo, and other authorities, that she is a dangerous woman; and that I am sent by her particular friend Miss Hartopp, to recall her from the evil tenor of her ways. "Dear heart alive"—that is one of her favourite expressions—"I am sure that if any of these good gentlemen knew our parish as well as I do, they would not be cross with me.

Why, what would Betty Saunders have done with her seven children this cold winter without the soup-kitchen and the blanket fund? but that reminds me I have not got Miss Hartopp's subscription to the blanket fund. You don't think I am wrong, do you, Mr. Milverton? It is only one of your odd ways, coming and talking to me in this fashion. That's what you gentlemen call being ironical, is it not?"

Now it does not do to be ironical with ladies, so I said at once, "Rightly understood, these political economists, I dare say, are with you: if not, hang them, and hang the critics too. By the way, don't let me detain you from calling on Miss Hartopp for her subscription. She will be particularly liberal after having delivered her lecture on political economy, as she always is. Good morning."

*Ellesmere.* I suspect again it is but Miss Matilda Milverton and Miss Tabitha Ellesmere that are the principal persons in the story. I have no doubt that if there be such a person as Miss Hartopp, she is quite in the right, and that Dunsford's parish is demoralised by flannel. But Milverton, like all authors, is manifestly sore on the subject of criticism.

*Milverton.* Indeed I am not. I am like Miss Strachey: I go on never minding, and when I am particularly attacked, I exclaim as she does, "Dear heart alive, perhaps the good gentlemen would be with me if they knew our parish as well as I do." And, besides, seriously speaking, I am penetrated with an ever-present sense of the difference of human beings, each from all the rest. I am not surprised, therefore, or shocked when people differ from me, and honestly blame me. I should be very much astonished if they did not. I remember though, once, to have been considerably startled by the effect of some hostile criticism. I cannot tell you what publication it was in, but it represented me as an impostor, a fool, a plagiarist, and a scoundrel. The editor had taken particular care to send it to me, and it came at breakfast time. Now every man who has any observation



knows what a poor and erring creature he is, and he is rather pleased and flattered at seeing that other people have not got hold of the right things to say against him. I was therefore rather tickled and pleased at this abuse than otherwise. I laughed heartily, and tossed the paper over to the girls. I remember Miss Blanche failed to perceive the joke. Women always get into a rage when those they love—I mean when those they have any regard for—are attacked.

*Blanche.* I wish we had him here !

*Ellesmere.* If anybody supposes that that is an aspiration of pure benevolence on the part of Miss Blanche, he is mistaken.

*Milverton.* To continue my story. It was the evening of the same day when I happened to notice Walter reading most intently at the tea-table. He is not here, is he.

*Dunsford.* No ; he has run off to have a nearer look at the soldiers.

*Milverton.* I watched the boy for some minutes, noticed his flushed cheek, but thought with pleasure that the power of concentrating his attention is the very thing I long to see in him. It makes the great difference between men's capacities, this power. Still, I said to myself, I must interrupt him. He was then in delicate health. I stole softly behind the boy, smoothed his hair, and looked down on what he was reading, with the intention of asking a question and breaking the thread of his thoughts. It was this stupid review or newspaper that the boy had got hold of: and he was intently studying the worst part of the abuse that had been lavished on his father. I don't know how it was; but somehow or other this shocked me a little. Of course the child would indignantly repel the accusations made against me; but I thought to myself the bloom of his regard would gradually be rubbed off. The children of the neighbouring squires grow up in profound and undisturbed belief in their fathers——

*Ellesmere.* Well, I don't know; I don't think Master Walter's faith in you is shaken yet. I know I have to feel the sharpness of his knuckles whenever I attack you.

*Milverton.* Of course the writer of that abuse would say, and with some justice :—" This is your proper punishment for being a thief and a scoundrel." I reply, " At least, my friend, you ought to be very sure of the thieving and the scoundrelism of the man before you write down those accusations against him which are likely to be read by those who are nearest and dearest to him." I know that I said to myself, I will be more careful even than I have been in making railing accusations against anybody. It is a little incident from which I derived some good, and perhaps, after all, have much to thank the writer for.

*Blanche.* I only say I wish we had him here !

*Ellesmere.* A beautiful quality in women is their promptness to forgive.

But, to return to the original subject, for you have wandered off from criticism. to calumny. Criticism is but a child compared with calumny : mere bows and arrows to artillery.

*Milverton.* I am not so sure of that. I have something to say about calumny that I meant to have said to you the other day when some one was making a great fuss about being calumniated. That calumny is great, I admit. No one, indeed, can well exaggerate her power ; or follow out her busy ways and singular ingenuity without mixed feelings of awe and admiration. How clever she is, for instance, in making use of dull, ignorant, and idle people, using them as the conduits to conduct, and the feeders to multiply the accidental remarks and jokes, and malice of cleverer people, so that she fertilises the whole groundwork of society with injurious reports, which cannot be well contradicted about her victims. Let any transaction be as white as a hound's tooth, she can so adroitly discolour it,

that the original whiteness may never be restored. But any description that I could give of her would be poor compared with what Beaumarchais, who understood her better than any one else, has said.

*Ellesmere.* I do not recollect the passage.

*Milverton.* "La calomnie, monsieur? Vous ne savez guère ce que vous dédaignez; j'ai vu les plus honnêtes gens près d'en être accablés. Croyez qu'il n'y a pas de plate méchanceté, pas d'horreurs, pas de conte absurde, qu'on ne fasse adopter aux oisifs d'une grande ville en s'y prenant bien; et nous avons ici des gens d'une adresse . . . ! D'abord un bruit léger, rasant le sol comme hirondelle avant l'orage, *pianissimo* murmure et file et sème en courant le trait empoisonné. Telle bouche le recueille, et *piano*, *piano* vous le glisse en l'oreille adroitement. Le mal est fait, il germe, il rampe, il chemine, et *rinforzando* de bouche en bouche il va le diable; puis, tout-à-coup, ne sais comment, vous voyez calomnie se dresser, siffler, s'enfler, grandir à vue d'œil. Elle s'élance, étend son vol, tourbillonne, enveloppe, arrache, entraîne, éclate, et tonne; et devient, grâce au ciel, un cri général, un *crescendo* public, un chorus universel de haine et de proscription. Qui diable y résisterait?"

I have myself said sharp things against calumny, though not worthy to be mentioned on the same day with this passage from Beaumarchais; but in my heart of hearts, I think I have wronged her, and I repent me of what I have said. Calumny herself has been a most calumniated "party," to use the mercantile slang word of the day, and it is time that something should be said in her behalf.

*Dunsford.* Really, Milverton, this seems very paradoxical—not to say sophistical.

*Ellesmere.* I like it. I believe in it. Let us give three cheers for calumny.



*Milverton.* See the good that she has done : consider the comfort she has been to mankind. She makes men happy by giving them a grievance. Suppose she were not calumny, but truth ! Even the worst of us, forgetting what might truly be said against us, rejoice in the fact that the things that are said are for the most part calumnious. The bandit, to whom seventeen murders are charged, admits that he has had three or four "accidents," but appeals to his wife whether he is not a calumniated man, and feels that society has done him a great wrong in charging the whole seventeen upon him.

Now consider the moon. We began by knowing nothing of her merits or demerits. She was highly lauded by poets, but she was very often deeply calumniated. Fickle, change-ful, inconstant, were adjectives often applied to her. Strange, and not very creditable stories were invented about her amours. Then comes the astronomer. He tells us, it is true, of her merits and uses, but he takes a great deal of the poetry away from her. He treats her, perhaps, as a fragment split off from the earth : he pries into her adust surface of extinct volcanoes ; and, altogether, the moon, I imagine, would rather have been calumniated as fickle, amorous, inconstant, than truthfully mapped out by the Astronomer Royal. Depend upon it, there is not one of us who will bear as much looking into as the moon, and who had not better be contented with the calumnies uttered about him than run any risk of the truth being noised about. Besides, we all enjoy the advantage of having a grievance.

*Ellesmere.* I quite admit that last sentiment. A man without a grievance is a poor, naked creature. A rich man who has not had his losses ; a politician who has been rightly placed, and never misunderstood ; a lawyer or a divine who has met with promotion exactly at the right time ; an inventor who has really had his invention " taken into due consideration " by official persons ; a patriot who

has never been in prison :—miserable men, all of them. And then, if calumny overlooks them, there is no chance of their getting a good grievance. I begin to be alive to the huge merits of calumny. Really, Milverton is a sensible man, sometimes.

*Milverton.* I will give you now one of the most curious instances of calumny I ever met with. It is about a man who lived many hundred years ago, an old Pope, John the Twenty-Second. When I was a youth, I remember reading somewhere that the said John the Twenty-Second put people to death for being poor. This dwelt in my mind ; I thought to myself, this really was a strong measure on the part of the head of the Christian Church. Long afterwards I happened to get a glimpse of what was the origin of the story. Sundry monastic persons took it into their heads that they could not by any possibility hold property. The question was referred to the Pope. He decided that they could hold property. A raging controversy took place. No doubt some of these people were delivered over to the secular arm, but it was for denying the power of the Pope, and not for being poor.

*Ellesmere.* John the Twenty-Second ! What a vista of Popes John it gives us ; and I know nothing about them. I never remember their right names. I could not tell you, for instance, which Gregory it was who forbade the marriage of the clergy. A subtle man that, and wise in his generation. If there had been a Mrs. Thomas à Becket, the Constitutions of Clarendon would have been adopted easily enough ; at least I suspect so. All fathers of families are very malleable, if not absolutely unprincipled. Milverton would rob a church, or at least a chapel, in order to get Walter up a step in some profession. We bachelors are the only men in the world who are firm in principle and perfectly virtuous. We can afford to be so ; the others can not. What a House of Commons it would be, if it were

elected by bachelors only ! In the next Reform Bill I shall propose taking away the power of voting from all married men, the fathers of families.

But to return to your story. Pope John the Twenty-Second must have been a happy man. That was a grand calumny ; just the thing one would like to have said of one if one were perfectly innocent. I have always fancied that I should like to have a striking calumny current about myself, because I should then see who among my friends would stand by me through it. Besides, I am too much asked out to dinner now, and it would thin off the invitations mightily. Our friend Pontefract would invite me to breakfast ; and Milverton, believing in the calumny, would still ask me down to Worth-Ashton. The rest of the world would fight shy of me ; but I should not care much for that. Dunsford would write a sermon against me, and I should not care very much for that. But I am a hardened wretch. And now let us go to dinner, for it is about the time that decent people are getting their breakfast in England, and, consequently, rather late for the dinner at a German *table-d'hôte*. We have talked so much that I am immensely hungry. There is nothing like talking to insure an appetite. All great talkers are great eaters.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Before this discussion ends, I must beg leave to say my say about it ; and that is, that you have all shown a want of knowledge of the world, and treated the matter a great deal too gravely. A large part of hostile criticism is but jubilant flippancy.

*Ellesmere (aside to me).* The sombre fat man means this for a hit at me. The bear has disliked the monkey from time immemorial.

*Mr. Midhurst.* But how can it be otherwise ? How difficult it is to praise and to amuse at the same time. Any monkey tricks [*Ellesmere. I told you so.*] are amusing in attack, or in dispraise : but let the most practised writer

try to praise, or to estimate justly, or to encourage, and he can hardly avoid becoming serious. Is there such a thing as "smart" praise? And "smartness" is the right article for the market; the one most eagerly demanded, the most readily produced. All praise, Sir John, is dull, except to the person praised, his wife, his grown-up daughters, and perhaps one or two intimate and loving friends. Such is mankind. I cannot help it. If it were a question of voting, I should vote that laudation should be as amusing as censure; but it cannot be made so, and there is an end of the matter.

*Ellesmere.* I should vote on the other side; for if praise were as amusing as censure, how we should be inundated by the praise uttered in little cliques and knots of men, of one another.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Puffing is not praise, Sir John, and puffing may be made amusing. Do not answer me. If we get into any controversy we shall be late for dinner, and no goodness of controversy can make up for coldness of soup.

## CHAPTER V.

## BIOGRAPHY.

WE had wandered through a long gallery of statues. Many of them were the statues of obscure men, but this did not prevent Ellesmere, who was in a very humorous mood, and acted as a sort of showman, from giving us a minute account of their lives, derived from what he saw in their countenances. Ellesmere is particularly fond of statues, because, as he says, you can walk all round them; whereas, he adds, you cannot get at the back of a picture. Then, he maintains that the backs of men's heads are the most important parts of their heads, and besides, he says, men cannot screw them up into a hypocritical shape. This is just the paradoxical way in which Ellesmere loves to talk. From Ellesmere's biographies we passed to biography in general. At the beginning of the conversation Milverton did not do justice, I think, to some of the great biographical works that were mentioned. He seemed to have thought so himself, from the following remark which he made; at which point I take up the conversation, and from which I can record it pretty accurately.

*Milverton.* I am afraid I am not a fair judge of biography, I so much prefer to it the grand march of history: I do



not like to see men massacred by cares and miseries in detail.

*Ellesmere.* "Nothing like leather," says the cord-wainer.

*Milverton.* Yes, I must own that as a student of history I become more and more enamoured of the study. I seldom read late at night, thinking it an injudicious waste of life, but it was only the other night I found myself getting on to the small hours over an old chronicle which I have brought with me to study; and I thought to myself I was just like a boy over his first novel of Walter Scott's, to devour which he has furtively lit his candle after the rest of the house is gone to bed.

As for romance, what is there to be compared with the history of the Popes? Such works as Ranke and Dean Milman have written are to the mature mind what the *Tales of the Genii* are to the child. Now, you have a man dragged from a hermit's cell, in which he cannot stand upright, to be invested with the more than regal tiara, and to be the potentate of potentates on the earth. Then, from a Celestine the Fifth, who was forced into the Popedom after the above fashion, you have a Boniface the Eighth, one of the most accomplished men of his day, who is not dragged to power, but by consummate art, and by his dominating presence, grasps the Papacy with anything but unwilling hands; who, as the Romans said of him, "came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, died like a dog."

What a supremely interesting business, age after age, is the choice of a Pope. He who would understand councils and learn how assemblages of men are swayed, will always find ample materials in studying the choice of Popes. Sometimes it was done in a day. Sometimes the impatient world had to wait for two or three years before the conclave of cardinals could be forced into a decision. What interests had to be conciliated, what fears dispelled, what hopes evoked, while this choice was going on; and often, after all

this turmoil, that which was unforeseen and unschemed for prevailed in the college of cardinals, as it does in the merest parish meeting.

Then, again, you have not a dominant vein of character, of one kind, which is to be seen in the long line of princes, where "Amurath to Amurath succeeds," as in our Plantagenets, our Tudors, or our Stuarts; but you have something far more interesting, a new character, brought in each time to see what he can make of ruling this troubled world. Often utterly insecure in his own turbulent capital, and obliged to flee from it, he is governing with a high hand, and with unabated claims for dominion, the distant kingdoms of the earth. Age is found to be no impediment to ambition or to vigour; and a Gregory the Ninth, at eighty years of age, is ready to contest the palm of empire with an emperor in his youth, or in his prime. Other high priests, patriarchs of Constantinople and the like, are great in their capitals; but their dominion dies away in distant circles, like the agitation of water, each ring becoming fainter and fainter; while in the Middle Ages the Pope's supremacy tends to concentrate from without, from the distant to the near. Never was the triumph of great ideas over mere physical force so visible and so transcendent.

*Ellesmere.* I do not give up my *Tales of the Genii* or the *Arabian Nights*.

*Milverton.* Nor do I pretend to despise fiction. I am voracious too over that; but I will tell you a singular pleasure that there is in history which is seldom attached to fiction. You study the characters in a novel, and they come to their end in it, and you do not meet with them any more; but in history, the same people reappear, or the results of their doings present themselves at distant periods from their own times, and at last, after some reading of history, you come to look at the principal actors as a large family party.

*Ellesmere.* Rather too large, I think, to be interesting.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I agree with Milverton. In different histories you find the same man involved in different sets of circumstances, and when you are reading about his conduct in one of these sets, you have the pleasure of a certain familiarity with him, and of contrasting his conduct under the differing circumstances.

*Milverton.* Yes: I have had experience of that, for instance, in observing Charles the Fifth as a ruler of colonies, and the same Charles as a European monarch. A similar thing may be noticed of our own people. England as a great colonial governor, England as a great European state—and the various bearings of one position upon the other, form an exceedingly interesting subject for thought. Then, say what you like (and Ellesmere will be sure to say something very unpleasant), there is a satisfaction in reading about events that have happened, or are presumed to have happened, of statements that are true, or at least are meant to be true.

*Ellesmere.* I like to fancy what would happen to some bulky tomes of history if they were written in a certain magical ink, which, after a time, refused to hold lies, and so all that was false would suddenly disappear. There would be some blanks, eh, Milverton? A good many of the adjectives and adverbs would vanish from every page. Whole chapters assigned to explain the motives of the principal actors would present a very white appearance, and would allow ample room for another set of motives to be introduced by a new commentator, which, after a time, if they were written in the same ink, would also probably in their turn disappear, giving room for a wholesome and truthful blankness.

*Milverton.* In this respect history does not differ much from the narratives of every-day life. We must observe, comment, and narrate, and must often make huge mistakes in history as in daily life. Still it is a noble effort of man

to try and describe in the best way he can what has happened in the world. All literature, as Goethe says, is but a fragment of a fragment.

*Ellesmere.* If I were to make a confession about my likings for literature, I should say that I was fond of fiction, that I did not dislike biography, that I could bear a good deal of poetry in fine weather, and that I had that respectful admiration for history which is based upon a distant acquaintanceship, and not injured by over-familiarity.

Law-cases, now, are very nice reading, combining fiction and biography, and arising out of the most touching and poetical circumstances in human life—out of marriage settlements, for example.

*Milverton.* Talking of biographies, you behold that boy at his favourite pastime, endeavouring to make ducks and drakes, but the stream is too strong for him. There you see the greatest biographer of the coming age. Notable men would even now begin to cultivate his acquaintance in the hopes of being biographised by him, if they knew as much as I know about his biographical powers.

*Ellesmere.* So Walter is a genius after all. I knew he could throw a stone remarkably well, but I did not know he was a genius.

*Dunsford.* Milverton did not say he was a genius, but that he would become a good biographer.

*Milverton.* Thank you, Dunsford: Ellesmere is always keeping other people to the point. But you shall judge for yourselves of Walter's capacity as a biographer. Ever since Dunsford has chronicled our conversations, Ellesmere, we have become in some measure famous, or rather notorious. I cannot say we are much obliged to him for it, but so it is. I dare say, Ellesmere, that you are often applied to for a short sketch of your life.

*Ellesmere.* Oh yes, very often.

*Milverton.* I, too, sometimes have that honour inflicted

upon me. Well, during Walter's last holidays, he heard me read out one morning at breakfast-time such an application. After breakfast he took a walk with me. I saw something was on the boy's mind. At last he suddenly asked me, "Do sons often write the lives of fathers?"—"Often," I replied; "but I do not think they are the best kind of biographers, for you see, Walter, sons cannot well tell the faults and weaknesses of their fathers, and so filial biographies are often rather insipid performances."—"I don't know about that," he said, "I think I could write yours. I have made it already into chapters."—"Now, then, my boy," I said, "begin it: let us have the outline at least." Walter then commenced his biography.

"The first chapter," he said, "should be you and I and Henry walking amongst the trees and settling which should be cut down, and which should be transplanted."—"A very pretty chapter," I said, "and a great deal might be made of it."—"The second chapter," he continued, "should be your going to the farm, and talking to the pigs."—"Also a very good chapter, my dear."—"The third chapter," he said, after a little thought, "should be your friends. I would describe them all, and what they could do." There you see, Ellesmere, you would come in largely, especially as to what you could do. "An excellent chapter," I exclaimed, and then of course I broke out into some paternal admonition about the choice of friends, which I know will have no effect whatever; but still one cannot help uttering these paternal admonitions. "Now then," I said, "for chapter four." Here Walter paused, and looked about him vaguely for a minute or two. At length he seemed to have got hold of the right idea, for he burst out with the words, "My going back to school;" and that, it seemed, was to be the end of the biography.

Now, was there ever so honest a biographer? His going back to school was the "be-all and end-all here" with him,

and he resolved it should be the same with his hero, and with everybody concerned in the story.

Then see what a pleasant biographer the boy is ! He does not drag his hero down through the vale of life, amidst declining fortune, breaking health, dwindling away of friends, and the usual dreariness of the last few stages. Neither does the biography end with the death of his hero ; and, by the way, it is not very pleasant to have one's children contemplating one's death, even for the sake of writing one's life ; but the biographer brings the adventures of his hero to an end by his own going back to school. How delightful it would be if most biographers planned their works after Walter's fashion : just gave a picture of their hero at his farm, or his business ; then at his pleasure, as Walter brought me amongst my trees ; then, to show what manner of man he was, gave some description of his friends ; and concluded by giving an account of their own going back to school—a conclusion that is greatly to be desired for many of them.

You will observe that he said nothing about the publication of letters, or of intimate conversations.

*Ellesmere.* I admire the boy amazingly. Henceforth I shall not call you Leonard Milverton, but Walter Milverton's, the great biographer's, father. Moreover, he shall write my life ; and I will entrust him with all the correspondence I have kept, which will consist of two or three invitations to dinner that by some chance have escaped burning with the rest of my letters. Meanwhile, I will go and assist him in throwing stones. I am a greater "dab," as he calls it, at that than he is ; and I do hope this will be mentioned in some one of the four chapters which he may condescend to write about his father or myself.

A thought occurs to me. What if we were to go a little lower down in the creation than a boy ? What if we were to choose a dog as a biographer ? Depend upon it Fixer

takes a just view of all our characters : a sound, hearty, English bull-dogian view. I forsake Walter Milverton ; and if my life is to be written at all, it shall be written by Fixer.

Here the dog being looked at by all of us, and conscious that he was being talked of, set up a melancholy howl, then went up to Milverton, put his fore-paws upon his knees, and tried to lick his face.

*Ellesmere.* The dog says, as plainly as dog-language can say, that all biography is odious to him. (Fixer, I am inclined to be of your opinion) ; but he adds, like a faithful creature as he is, that if he must write anybody's life, it shall be Milverton's. I see I must content myself with Walter, and, accordingly, I go to curry favour with my future biographer.

*Milverton.* No : stop a moment, Ellesmere ; I really want to show you in earnest what a good biographer Walter is. Contemplate again the beauty of the climax. As he winds up with the important event in his own life, and knows something about it, he really can describe it : whereas, when the ordinary biographer attempts to describe the important event in his hero's life, he generally makes but a sorry business of it ; and perhaps, it had better never be told at all. A poet of our own times has been heard to say, "What a blessing it is, that, notwithstanding all the ferreting that has gone on, we know, comparatively speaking, so little of Shakspeare's life." I am always afraid of their finding out something more.

*Mr. Midhurst.* It is all very well for the unfortunate victims of biography to complain. Eels and lobsters would have a great deal to say too about the treatment they receive from mankind. But you must admit that the life of a man is a most amusing thing, even when written by his son—

no allusion to Walter, whose work promises to be a splendid instance of biographical power and sagacity. I repeat, the life of a man is very amusing until the latter part of it, when it becomes intensely interesting.

*Milverton.* I really cannot agree with you, seeing how they are mostly written at present, being overlaid with trashy letters and unimportant details. It must be a very choice life, happily composed of thought and action, that should make a good subject for biography; and——

*Ellesmere.* And the divine art of skipping, unhappily understood by few people, should be exercised liberally both in the writing and the reading.

*Milverton.* I admit that there is generally something——often two or three things——which are worth chronicling in the life of almost every man of mark; but they are often intellectual facts, or I should rather say, intellectual processes. Were these things recorded, our knowledge of psychology would be greatly increased. I have been exceedingly curious all my life to know how men of great intellectual labour perform their work. I believe I have told you this before. I always inquire, when I can, of every man renowned for work, how he gets through his work. I wish I could call for a return of such statistical details.

*Ellesmere.* Do not trouble yourself: I can tell you in a very few words how all work is done. Getting up early, eating vigorously, saying "No" to intruders resolutely, doing one thing at a time, thinking over difficulties at odd times, *i.e.*, when stupid people are talking in the House of Commons, or speaking at the Bar, not indulging too much in affections of any kind which waste the time and energies, carefully changing the current of your thoughts before you go to bed, planning the work of the day in the quarter of an hour before you get up, playing with children occasionally, and avoiding fools as much as possible: that is the way to do a great deal of work.



*Milverton.* This is all very fine talking, my dear fellow; but will you tell me, in detail, how a working man shall avoid fools as much as possible? Why, that one subject would form the most laborious essay and conversation we have ever attempted. It is the art of life; and you speak of it as if it were a little item of human conduct, which might be managed with the same ease as taking a bath every day: a thing by the way you might as well have thrown into your catalogue of ways and means for working sedulously.

But there are other things that men might tell us about themselves, which men hardly ever do tell, which a biographer seldom gets at, and yet which would be most useful to the world.

To give you an instance—a very remarkable instance. I was talking the other day, on this same subject of biography, with a well-known man of letters, who said,—“There is only one thing in my life which is worth knowing, and it could be told in a page or two.” I wish I could give the story in his own graphic words, but I will do the best I can.

“When I was a boy,” he said, “I was at a large school where there were three hundred and twenty boys. You will hardly believe it, but it is nevertheless painfully true, that in one of the greatest branches of boy education there were three hundred and nineteen who were before me. In fact, I was the stupidest boy in the school at original composition, for that was the subject. The head-master gave out his theme, placing his cocked-hat on the table, and reading out a bit of Blair. I used to take the heading of the theme back to my room, spend half an hour in looking at it, placing it in different lights physically, not mentally,—and at the end found out that I had nothing whatever to say about it. My tutor, regarding me with an expression of unutterable pity, used to exclaim, ‘Smithers’ (we will

call him Smithers), "you are a good boy, and give me very little trouble. You are not without wits either, but you are the stupidest little dog at original composition that ever came under the administration of this ferule."

"Time went on. I became a man; and I suppose I may say without any great presumptuousness, that I have rather distanced my three hundred and nineteen young friends and rivals, in what is called original composition. At least if I have not, I am the most successful impostor on record; and I wish to heaven the imposture could be found out as speedily as possible, for I am troubled now, not only about my own original composition but about that of nearly all other men. Lawyers, poets, divines, statesmen, historians, publishers, send me their sermons, their acts of parliament, their memoranda, their histories, and their poems, and beg for criticisms, retrenchments, additions, or general remarks. When it is warm weather and people feel suggestive, I receive about three letters a week pointing out to me what works I should write, and desiring me to sit down and write them instantly. I cannot therefore be blind to the fact that I have some power in composition, or have very successfully deluded the world into a belief that I have."

*Ellesmere.* I can guess who it is. But how did the man account for his early stupidity: that is what we want to know. Was he sickly as a boy, and vigorous as a man? Was his one of those slow-going intellects we sometimes, though rarely, read of?

*Milverton.* You may be sure I did not let him go away without accounting for the phenomenon. The explanation is as simple as a straight line. "The truth is," he said, "though not a bit better than other men, and in many respects a great deal worse, I have about me a deadly kind of sincerity—an almost stupid sincerity. I never tell myself any lies, whatever I may do to the rest of the world. I can-

not talk from derived thoughts. I must have seen or felt the things myself that I describe.

"Accordingly, when the master read out for a theme 'Envy: the hissing serpent of the soul,' no ideas, or rather pretences of ideas, were kind enough to enter this unfortunate mind. I knew nothing whatever about envy, or whether it was a serpent or a black beetle. I did not even envy the little lads about me who had such a knack of knocking off a theme about envy. To tell the truth, I did not acquire any knowledge of envy worth speaking of, until I got it rather late in life from the study of one man's character, who is notoriously one of the most envious persons in the world. For some time I supposed that man to be a very great critic, and a very wise man. At last I found out that envy was the motive power of his soul. After that study I could have dashed off themes about envy to any extent; but, when I was a boy, you might have beaten me black and blue before you could have got out of me any ideas whatever on the subject.

"Now let us take another subject for a theme. The master read out:—'A great man is never greater than in adversity.' I took the heading home, put it on my desk, and stared at it hopelessly. I did not know what a great man is like. I did not know what adversity is (we had no such thing as adversity at Mudford where I was born); and, having a very sceptical nature, I should have doubted extremely whether the great man is greater in adversity.

"Now, I have some notion about great men. I have lived much in the world, and have seen a few great men. If I were one of your essay-writing people, I dare say I could write an essay on greatness. With adversity, too, I am now sufficiently well acquainted; and, after much hesitation, I have made up my mind when a great man is greater in adversity, and I find that it depends upon his temperament; and I think I could show you the kind of

great man that will be greater in adversity, and the kind of great man that will be greater in prosperity. Oh dear, dear ! How I wish I was back at school again ! What a theme I could rattle off upon this subject, and how I would delight the heart of my old tutor.

“ In the composition of verses, my inaptitude was still more abject and deplorable.

“ ‘ Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,  
Dulce loquentem.’

That was the subject for the week’s verses. But I knew nothing about Lalage, and cared nothing about Lalage. Now, alas ! I could tell you a great deal about Lalage : perhaps a little too much. I am ready to make verses upon Lalage to an unlimited extent. I have half a mind to go back to school immediately, in order to have an opportunity of making the verses.

“ Now suppose my tutor, instead of being a kind-hearted, tolerant old gentleman, had been a vexatious, small-minded pedant, he would have had me scourged and pounded and held up to ridicule, until really all possibility of ever writing about Lalage, or the great man in adversity, had been driven out of me. But, on the contrary (bless him for it !), he had faith in me, notwithstanding his grievous and painful doubts about my ‘ original composition,’ and sheltered me, and took my part, and polished up any rude stuff I could beg, borrow, or steal, about Lalage, or the great man in adversity. What a lesson this should be to masters, tutors, and parents, to be very careful lest they misunderstand a boy, and punish him needlessly !

“ I cannot hide from myself that the very cause of my failure at school was the cause of my success afterwards. Even when I write common-place things now, the world, which after all knows a great deal more about us than we think, sees that these common-places are not common-places

to me ; that I have thought them out painfully, and that they are serious things to me ; and accordingly it is interested by them. The same stupid sincerity is the sole secret of my success. Mark you, Milverton, the stupidity has not in the least degree diminished. If I wrote on the same subjects that you do, I could say nothing about them till I had seen the things themselves. Out of my own fancy, and relying upon other people's statements, I could not say anything whatever about the sewers of London, the cellars of Liverpool, the wynds of Edinburgh, or the cottages in Dorsetshire. I must work at them for myself. After seeing anything worth writing about, I am troubled with an overflow rather than a deficiency of ideas, and have to put a severe restraint upon myself not to say more than a quarter of what I think.

"There, sir," he concluded, "you have the confession of the stupidest boy among three hundred and twenty : and that is the only thing in my life worth recording."

*Dunsford.* This is a most valuable story, and I begin to fear lest I myself, when tutor of my college, should have said or done something harsh to some gentle youth, which he did not deserve.

*Ellesmere.* I know a gentle youth whom you treated like a dog, because he could not understand something in optics, which probably now will turn out to be all wrong, but which the docile Jones, and the cramming Brown, and the inveterately stupid Robinson understood at once, and saw no difficulty in. You asked them to a wine-party, I recollect, and you did not ask me. I felt the neglect deeply.

*Dunsford.* Sir, I recollect to this day the immense number of impertinent excuses for utter idleness with which you used to vex me—pretending not to understand things that were as clear as daylight, and trying to involve me in all manner of contradictions when I was explaining anything to you. I partly guessed your tricks then. I know them

now but too well. I was speaking of some honest, really perplexed individual, and not of such rogues as you.

Upon this Ellesmere got up, came with a very penitent attitude to me, and said, "Please, sir, may I have a dinner to-day out of hall? Some friends have just come up to see me ; and please, sir, I perfectly understand that problem in optics which you were so good as to explain to us ; and I am sure I cannot think how I should ever have been so stupid as not to understand at once so lucid an explanation as that which you gave us ; and may I have the order for dinner, sir? It is only for eight and a small-college man or two, and we don't count them as anything."

I gave him leave to have the dinner, for I have always been easily imposed upon, and we marched off to have our own dinner at the table-d'hôte.

## CHAPTER VI.

## PROVERBS.

WE were standing on the bridge at Wurzburg, and admiring the picturesque effect of the great statues which adorn the piers of that bridge. On the previous evening we had entered the town, coming over that bridge by moonlight ; and I do not know that I ever saw anything ornamental in architecture that pleased me so much ; but then I am an untravelled man, and am easily pleased. I expressed my admiration to the rest, and my wonder that no adornment of this kind had ever been tried, to my knowledge, in England. Milverton thus answered me.

You see, we are timid people ; and we fear anything unusual. We may be dull, but we are resolved to be gentlemanlike. Hence our fear of bright colours, and our horror of anything that is singular in the way of decoration, however appropriate it may be.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I do not quite agree with this. I think some of the errors of the English, in point of taste, arise from accidental circumstances. Our people are accustomed to ugliness. How does this arise ? I say, from contractors having done the work of architects : so that our buildings over large areas are turned out like manufactured goods, in set patterns. Of course this is the most expeditious and the cheapest mode of going to work ; but it is a great dis-

couragement to the first-rate artisan ; and it throws the great architect into obscurity.

*Ellesmere.* When I hear you all talking in this way, especially Dunsford, who, after his patriotic fashion, is always anxious to adopt in England whatever he may see to be good in other countries, I am reminded of a certain Eastern proverb, which, from its graphic satire, always delighted me. "The horses of the pasha came down to the water to be shod ; the beetle stretched out his leg too." Dunsford sees the works of great men in great times, and thinks that he and his parish clerk, taking the advice of the other inhabitants of Mudfieldcum-Slushmore, will be able to turn out as good a thing, or a better. But is it not a good proverb ? Cannot you see the beetle stretching out his leg too ?

*Milverton.* You delight in proverbs, Ellesmere. You are a modern Sancho Panza.

*Ellesmere.* Yes: they are the cream of a nation's thought. But it has always been a great subject of curiosity with me how they got vogue, and indeed, how they were ever invented. Nobody invents proverbs now ; at least I never heard but of one person who did, and his proverbs did not get any vogue. Now which do you think is the best proverb in the world ? It is, to my mind, a very common one. Guess.

*Milverton.* It is an absurd question. I dare say there are ten thousand very good proverbs in the world, and we should have to pick out that one which best suits the Ellesmerian nature. Besides, when one reads a collection of proverbs, like Dean Trench's for instance, one becomes utterly bewildered as to any choice among them. But tell us your favourite.

*Ellesmere.* It is an English one, known and appreciated, I have no doubt, by millions of people, "Nobody knows where the shoe pinches but the wearer." That is a con-



summate proverb : instantly intelligible ; drawn from the most familiar sources. A child can appreciate the truth of it, and yet it is so subtle and profound, that the oldest man will not have exhausted its meanings. There is another proverb that greatly delights me, but for a different reason :—"To *be* poor and *seem* poor is the very devil." Now it is a funny thing that that should be a favourite proverb in a Christian country. It tells a good deal about the inhabitants of that country, I think.

A curious idea has just come into my mind about proverbs, and one that you might work out, Milverton, with very considerable results. It is to observe what English proverbs the Americans have adopted. I would make a large bet that my shoe proverb is among them. Then it would be curious to see what proverbs they have invented for themselves. Altogether, I can foresee, that a shrewd man, if he could get at the facts about proverbs in the two countries, would cunningly weave out a disquisition on the differences of character in the two nations that would be well worth having.

I declare I am giving you quite a lecture about proverbs. Now I will put to you a difficulty which I have had, not about a proverb, but a proverbial expression. I have gradually arrived at the origin of many proverbial expressions. There was one which used to puzzle me very much often used by my father, and men of that standing. They used to say:—"Ignorant as dirt." It was always "Ignorant as dirt." Now I could not see why dirt should be ignorant. Dirt, as Lord Palmerston has admirably said, is "merely a thing in the wrong place." If the proverb had been against the creators or the maintainers of dirt, it would have been another thing. At last, however, the difficulty was explained, for one fine day I came upon the expression, "Ignorant as dirt," in that vast repertory of useful knowledge, the works of Mr. William Shakspeare. That accounts for its being used by men who, like my father, were steady listeners,

night after night, to the plays of Shakspeare. As to the expression itself, as Shakspeare uses it, I question no further. I have complete confidence in him.

Then as to another expression :—"Drunk as a lord ;" that is historical ; that recalls the last century ; that is true no more ; but the expression remains. Now I come to my main difficulty, which will puzzle you all—"As mad as a hatter." Why a hatter ?

*Milverton.* I can explain that at once. The perpetual working at anything so ugly must have a tendency to produce insanity. Think, too, of always being surrounded by multitudes of modern hats. If that is not enough to drive a man mad, what is ?

*Ellesmere.* Ah, you joke : but I should really like to know the origin of that expression. By the way, Milverton, you spoke of Sancho Panza, and his proverbs : is it merely a peculiarity of Sancho's, or are the Spanish people generally given to the quotation of proverbs ?

*Milverton.* I can hardly answer that question ; but the language is rich in proverbs,—far richer, I suspect, than that of any other nation. In the gravest works, even of theological writers, you find frequent reference to homely proverbs.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I will venture to say you will never bring any to equal my English one. I will not ask you to make the attempt at once ; but exercise your cruel memory—I say cruel, because any man with a very good memory is likely to be cruel in quotation—and bring us ten Spanish proverbs to-morrow, and see if my English one does not beat them all put together.

*Milverton.* I will do so ; but what should you say, my friend, if some fine day your proverb was to be altogether upset and rendered inapplicable ?

*Ellesmere.* What can you mean ?

*Mr. Midhurst.* Yes : what can he mean ?

*Milverton.* This age is full of great inventions. I honour

them all, and admire the inventors. But one of the greatest inventions for the comfort of mankind is yet to be invented, and that is a good and cheap shoe. Some of you may laugh at this; but Dunsford, who knows the ways of the poor well, will not laugh. I declare that if I were endeavouring to dissuade a poor couple from marrying, the first question I should ask them would be, "Have you thought about the expense for the shoes of the children?"

I am confident that we have not yet made trial of the many new materials which have come into our hands. Some time or other, I will give my whole mind to the making of a shoe, and if I were to succeed, my name would go down to posterity with Watt, Arkwright, Stephenson, and the man who first applied chloroform in cases of operation—Simpson, I think, was his name.

*Ellesmere.* And so you think to upset my pet proverb in that way, do you? You may make your good shoe, but fashion will always contrive to make it pinch somewhere. I have not the slightest fear for my proverb. It will last as long as Shakespeare. But don't you forget your ten Spanish proverbs, and bring them to us to-morrow well rendered in English.

*Milverton.* I will do so if I can. But in return I have a request to make of you. I could not help thinking, when you were delivering your short discourse on proverbs with so much force and perspicuity, why it should always have fallen upon me to write essays for the amusement of this good company. It is really your turn now, *Ellesmere*. It might be something of a worldly character, in which you could insert all those short, sharp sayings which you have evidently set such store by. It might be an elongated maxim of Rochefoucault's.

*Ellesmere.* I declare I have half a mind to do so, if only to put you all to shame for the disdain with which I see you treat worldly maxims. Let me see. What shall it be upon

—the art of developing one's self from a small Rector into a considerable Bishop, eh, Dunsford? Or the truth which always abides (sometimes rather hidden), in good diplomacy, Mr. Midhurst? Or the art of making a sanitary treatise read and sell like a brilliant novel, eh, Milverton? Or the most delicate modes by which a rich and obedient husband may be ensnared, Miss Vernon and Miss Blanche? Such essays might be useful to this company.

*Milverton.* Yes: sum up all these in one grand essay; and call it the arts of advancement in life.

*Mildred.* It will be a nauseous essay.

*Ellesmere.* Perhaps. But you will all listen to it with much greater attention than if I were to give you one upon the beauty of Virtue, or the nobility of Benevolence, or any other stock subject for preachment. Being so sure beforehand of the suffrage of Miss Vernon, I cannot resist making a humble attempt at such an essay. But I must have my time to do it in. I cannot, like these practised writers, Milverton and Dunsford, spin off, at a moment's notice, an indefinite yarn upon any given subject, or none at all. Besides, there will be a great deal compressed into a short space, in what I shall have to say; and even these writers will tell you, that when they have anything to say and must say it briefly, they are obliged to take a long time about their work.

*Mildred.* I can see that the modesty of the performance will be nearly equal to its other merits.

*Ellesmere.* Thanks, thanks, for this encouragement.

*Milverton.* I shall not bring my ten Spanish proverbs till the essay is ready.

*Ellesmere.* Be it so. That is a bargain.

Here the conversation ended; and we separated into parties to roam about the old town, and to walk in the palace gardens.

## CHAPTER VII.

## PROVERBS.

WE had to wait some time, both for Ellesmere's essay and for Milverton's Spanish Proverbs. I was somewhat surprised at Milverton's keeping us waiting, until he told me one day that he could remember Spanish proverbs by the dozen, and that he had written a great many down ; but, to tell the truth, he could not find one equal to the common English proverb which Ellesmere had quoted, and made so much of. He was therefore glad of the delay, in the hope that the wished-for proverb would suddenly come into his mind.

We had finished our stay at Würzburg, and were at Salzburg, when Ellesmere said he was ready, and that there was no longer any excuse for Milverton. It was very warm weather, and for our place of meeting we chose a sequestered spot whence we could see the snowy peaks of the Tyrolese Alps.

*Ellesmere.* Well, Milverton, are you ready for battle, with your ten Spaniards against my single Englishman ?

*Milverton.* You see, you are six English persons and a bull-dog who are to be the judges. Your proverb would not be worth much in Andalucia, where they wear sandals. However, I will begin at once. Before beginning, though,

I must observe that most of my proverbs have a pleasant jingle about them, which will be lost in translation, but which is a valuable adjunct to a proverb, as making it more easily rememberable.

*Callar y obrar, por la tierra y por la mar.* "To work and be silent, by land and by sea."

*Quien sufrió, venció.* "He who suffered, conquered." You must admit that is a fine proverb.

*Pensando á donde vas, te olvidas de donde vienes.* "Thinking where you are going, you forget from whence you come."

Now here is a hit at the lawyers:—*Papel y tinta y poca justicia.* "Plenty of paper and ink, and little justice."

*El mentir no tiene alcavala.* "Lying is not taxed."

*Mira que ates, que desates.* "Look that what you may tie, you can untie."

*Quien se viste de ruin paño, dos vezes se viste al año.* "He who clothes himself in bad cloth, has new clothes twice a year."—A just estimation of cheap bargains, I think.

Here is a sly hit against councils. *Siete hermanos en un consejo, á las vezes juzgan tuerto, á las vezes derecho.* "Seven brothers in a council, sometimes they judge awry, sometimes aright."

Here is a proverb, which conveys a touching appeal for tolerance. *Mirais lo que bebo, y no la sed que tengo.* "You see what I drink, but not the thirst I suffer." If we did but make some little allowance for our neighbour's thirst, we should judge more wisely sometimes. We are seldom thirsty ourselves just at the time when we are commenting upon thirsty people.

Here is rather a shrewd one, upon the advantage of fools. *Si el necio no fuese al mercado, no se venderia lo malo.* "If the fool did not go to market, the damaged goods would never be sold."

Here is rather a deep one, which it is difficult to render fully. *Sigue razon, aunque á unos agrade, y á otros non.*

"Right reason holds on its way, although it may please some, and others not."

*Tanto es lo de mas, como lo de menos.* "So much as there is of the more, so much there is of the less." That is a very wide proverb. One does not see at first how much may be made of it.

*Ellesmere.* Stop, stop! You are getting beyond the ten.

*Milverton.* Before I conclude, let me give you another, which it is quite fair to give, since it is French, and not Spanish. It occurred to me while I was hunting out the others in my memory. It is very ancient.

"Tout contraire en son contraire,  
Prent vertu pour soi refaire."

*Ellesmere.* I see, Milverton, from your looks that you know you have lost. Some of your proverbs are deep and wide, but they are not familiar enough. Far the best one, as it seems to me,—and it is leagues behind my English one,—is, "See that you can untie what you tie." As a pendant to mine it is not bad.

There is great depth and weight, though, in that French proverb. Indeed it hardly seems like a proverb. Before one could master it thoroughly, seven German metaphysicians would have to evoke the "Idea" of "the Contrary" out of the depths of their own moral consciousness, and afterwards to express their ideas in nine three-volumed works.

*Dunsford.* What do you mean, Ellesmere?

*Ellesmere.* My meaning will be made more clear by a quotation from Lewes's *Life of Goethe*.

"A Frenchman, an Englishman, and a German were commissioned, it is said, to give the world the benefit of their views on that interesting animal the Camel. Away goes the Frenchman to the *Jardin des Plantes*, spends an hour there

in rapid investigation, returns, and writes a *feuilleton*, in which there is no phrase which the Academy can blame, but also no phrase which adds to the general knowledge. He is perfectly satisfied, however, and says, *Le voilà, le chameau!* The Englishman packs up his tea-caddy and a magazine of comforts; pitches his tent in the East; remains there studying the Camel in its habits; and returns with a thick volume of facts, arranged without order, expounded without philosophy, but serving as valuable materials for all who come after him. The German, despising the frivolity of the Frenchman, and the unphilosophical matter-of-factness of the Englishman, retires to his study, there *to construct the Idea of a Camel from out of the depths of his Moral Consciousness.* And he is still at it."<sup>1</sup>

How I have laughed over this bit! I delight in the Frenchman more even than in the German—*Le voilà, le chameau!*

But to go back to our proverbs—you must admit, Milverton, that I have beaten you.

*Milverton.* Stay, stay, don't be so sure of the victory. Such an excellent Spanish proverb has occurred to me.

*Ellesmere.* Well! if I ever heard anything like this. Imagine the Derby race just over, the second horse beaten by three lengths or some enormous distance of that kind, and the second jockey insisting upon having the race run over again because his foot had got out of the stirrup, or because he had dropped his whip, or because a fly had settled on his nose. The idea is preposterous; nevertheless, we will hear the proverb.

*Milverton.* I only know an English version of it. I recollect where I met with the proverb. In that charming book, *Northcote's Conversations with Hazlitt.*

*Ellesmere.* Another fatal flaw. That clever fellow Hazlitt might have coined the proverb. But let us have it.

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<sup>1</sup> Vol ii. p. 201.



*Milverton.* "He who returns the first blow is the man who begins the quarrel." Is it not admirable? That is just the point at which the stricken person has the game in his power; and, if he have magnanimity and dignity, can almost always, without shame, prevent the quarrel. It is astonishing to find such a proverb amongst a people reported to be vengeful.

*Ellesmere.* It is very good, but it comes too late: we have no evidence that it is Spanish: and it is not sufficiently commonplace to come up to my beau idéal of a proverb. The victory<sup>1</sup> is doubly mine.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I congratulate Ellesmere on his victory, and look on it as a good omen for the forthcoming essay, which I am very impatient to hear.

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<sup>1</sup> I could have diminished the credit of Ellesmere's victory very much, if I had known then, as I do now, that both the Italians and the Germans have a *proverb similar* to his English one—"Nessun sente da che parte preme la scarpa, se non chi se la calza." "Es weiss niemand besser wo der Schuh drückt als der ihn trägt."—See *Polyglot of Foreign Proverbs*, by HENRY G. BOHN. London, 1857.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Ellesmere.* Now, before I begin, I must tell you that you will waste your time, if you give up your minds to criticising my style. Should you note anything inaccurate, or ungrammatical, you may conclude that it is put in on purpose. I am determined not to be a classic. Think what a dreadful thing it must be to be a classic. Imagine what the delicate, refined, weak-eyed Virgil must feel at his well-turned lines being chosen as an early exercise in Latin for every block-head. Imagine how Horace smiles sadly, and lifts up his eyebrow somewhat cynically, at his odes and satires, many of which can only be understood by an experienced man of the world, being submitted as solid taskwork to every juvenile dunce. Pity poor, genial, elegant Ovid, when his lissome lines are droned over with innumerable false quantities by some perplexed dolt of a beginner; and lastly, think of grand old Homer, as he went musing or raging by "the sad sea-waves," having a vision of his sublime wrath, or his unrivalled simplicity of thought and diction, being hashed and hammered and tortured into nonsense by innumerable tyros. How these great men must feel as if they were dogs-eared all over! Besides, how encrusted their names are with the curses of unstudious boys. Now I do not wish in the future that any lad should say to another, "I can't get up my confounded Ellesmere," while the other replies, "The beast! I've done him; but I missed such a jolly game of cricket last evening." No, ladies and gentlemen, I may be abused and misrepresented by you, as I dare

say I shall be; but I do not mean to be a terror and a provocation to bad words for any distant generation. My style consequently will be what is called "slip-slop," by no means classical, but rather such as the generous youth of future periods of the earth will be told to avoid diligently—upon which they will declare that I am "a brick."

*Milverton.* How ingeniously he has endeavoured to prevent all criticism upon his style; but it may be bad "slip-slop," and not only unclassical but dull. Criticism is not to be baulked or rendered nugatory by any of these artful mock-modest ways. However, let us begin. Ellesmere may, after all, prove to be a classic without knowing it, and even while he is intending the contrary.

Ellesmere then read the following essay:—

#### ON THE ARTS OF SELF-ADVANCEMENT.

**I**N the first place, it is desirable to be born north of the Tweed (I like to begin at the beginning of things); and if that cannot be managed, you must at least contrive to be born in a moderately-sized town—somewhere. You thus get the advantage of being favoured by a small community, without losing any individual force. If I had been born at Affpuddle—Milverton in Tolpuddle—and Dunsford in Tollerporcorum (there are such places, at least I saw them once arranged together in a petition to the house of Commons)—the men of Affpuddle, Tolpuddle, and Tollerporcorum would have been proud of us, would have been true to us, and would have helped to push our fortunes. I see, with my mind's eye, a statue of Dunsford raised in Tollerporcorum.

You smile, I observe ; but it is the smile of ignorance, for let me tell you, it is of the first importance not to be born vaguely, as in London, or in some remote country-house. If you cannot, however, be born properly, contrive at least to be connected with some small sect or community, who may consider your renown as part of their renown, and be always ready to favour and defend you.

Work in a groove, a well-worn groove (see Leonard Milverton, *passim*). You profit by the labour of untold generations who have helped to wear a way for you. The man who attempts anything new may be a great man, may be an inventive genius, but he has no right to expect any remarkable share of advancement. Advancement loves the easy, level, well-beaten paths of life.

Originality of character may be harmful, eccentricity of conduct may be injurious, peculiarity in dress or demeanour is most likely to be prejudicial to the man who would rise in the world ; but all these are nothing compared with the danger arising from any eccentricity of position. Let your position be commonplace, whatever you are yourself. If you are a genius, and contrive to conceal the fact, you really deserve to get on in the world, and you will do so, if only you keep upon the level road. Remember always that the world is a place where second rate people mostly succeed : not fools nor first-rate people.

Connect yourself in some way with the great Eating

interest. Provide sustenance, or distribute it, or defend it : and do this obviously. Any employment which is not connected closely with the manifest and continuous wants of mankind, will depend upon their caprices, and be subject to their shallow criticisms. This at once disposes of Art, Science, and Literature. It may admit the Clothing interest, in so far as this is not connected with art, refinement, or good taste.

Be known, if you can, for pre-eminence in one thing, even if it be the making of a button. It jars against the self-complacency of men, and astonishes them—now you do not want to astonish them—to find that a man can do two things very well. Sir Walter Scott, who knew mankind well, has spoken somewhere decisively upon this point, in reference to the great Lord Peterborough, who was a universal genius. Lord Bacon's life affords another instance ; Lord Carteret's, another ; and we all know many men who have remained obscure, chiefly because they could do too many things too well.

Do not indulge in loves or hatreds. They discompose the judgment, occupy time, and hinder self-advancement : but if you must indulge in these unprofitable passions—choose the hatreds.

In the commencement of affairs think always of the ending ; and picture to yourself innumerable difficulties. Do not suppose that anything will turn out rightly. Never believe in estimates ; and, generally, at the outset of a transaction, discourage, and seek to quell, all exuberant hopefulness in yourself. In the course of the

transaction you will have need of all the hopefulness you can muster. It is best to begin with a little aversion, not only in marriage, but in all other affairs that are to endure for a long time. Mrs. Malaprop was a wise woman, but her wisdom may be more extensively applied than she applied it.

Take almost anything that is offered to you in the way of advancement. A person, who is nicely and scrupulously observant of his own claims and merits, misses golden opportunities—and the years soon go by. I will refer you to Guicciardini on this point :—

“ Let him who would be employed beware of letting the possession of Business be drawn away from him : for one thing doth give occasion to another, and this not only, because from one thing thou dost naturally step on to another, but because of the reputation which being seen occupied in Affairs shall bring thee. Wherefore the proverb is here also proper ; one thing is father to another.”<sup>1</sup>

The shortness of life is a fruitful subject to moralists and sermon-writers. By the way, they have made life seem longer by making it duller. But this shortness of life is seldom fully appreciated by busy men of the world. Almost everybody's plans are laid down on too large a scale. On this point, Horace is good reading ; and a living statesman has not ill summed up life, when he wrote, “ Youth is a blunder : manhood a struggle : old age a regret.” He might, however, have appointed the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Maxims of Francis Guicciardini*, translated by Emma Martin, No. 78, p. 83.

three evils to each stage of life, and not have been very far from the truth.

Avoid all action with others to which you cannot give continuous attention. If you illuminate your work, Dunsford, that last maxim of mine should be written in letters of gold. You all think me a hard-hearted man, and the expression on your countenances has hitherto been rather that of disgust than approbation. But if you knew how much misery I have seen in the course of my profession—and sympathised with—arising out of the neglect of the foregoing maxim, you would at least give me credit for having some pitifulness in me. However, whether you do or not, I shall continue in the same strain.

Bring misfortune soon to a conclusion. There is a time when a wise man sees that a thing unfortunately begun, or ill-guided, will not improve. It drags on in the dirt, and becomes a heavier burden every day. The man who is careful of his fortunes will have the courageous wisdom to count his loss, and to put up with it. In connection with such a state of affairs I would advise you not to dwell much upon your failures. Pass on. Do not look back too much. Life will not bear this retrospection; and indulgence in vain regret is not a fitting luxury for those who have their fortunes to make. As some wise French writer has said:—“*Oublier, c'est le grand secret des natures fortes et créatrices.*”

Remember always that what is real and substantive ultimately has its way in this world.

You make good bricks for instance: it is in vain that

your enemies prove that you are a heretic in morals, politics, and religion ; insinuate that you beat your wife ; and dwell loudly on the fact that you failed in making picture-frames. In so far as you are a good brick-maker, you have all the power that depends on good brick-making ; and the world will mainly look to your positive qualities as a brick-maker.

This is a great consolation. You commit an error : you make a failure : you fall into discredit : and you think that you will never more have force or reputation in the world. This is a mistake. Only pluck up heart, and do something that is good or at least serviceable ; and you will be astonished to find how soon you are reinstated, and how much of your pristine vigour you have recovered. But if you cannot obey the French maxim, above quoted, that recommends forgetfulness, you will go on teasing yourself about the past, until you lose all power of doing something substantially useful and forcible, which may enable you to recover lost ground. The French writer proceeds to say, that you must forget “after the manner of Nature, which takes no cognizance of the past, but recommences at every hour the mysteries of her indefatigable productiveness.”<sup>1</sup>

In acting with other men, do not set them up in your

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<sup>1</sup> These are the French words. I do not know where Ellesmere found them, but I have since seen the passage in a work called *Life's Problems*, p. 172, London, 1857 :—

“Les existences foibles vivent dans les douleurs au lieu de les changer en apothègmes d'expérience. Elles s'en saturent et s'usent en retrogradant chaque jour dans les malheurs consommés. Oublier,



mind as wonderful heroes, abiding in consistency, and actuated by motives that are almost impossible to overcome. It is true that no calculation has yet been made of men's vanity which has been found too large ; but of all other motives you are likely to overrate the force.

When you have, therefore, to act with other men, calculate on their vanity being inordinate, on their weariness and forgetfulness being very great, and on their placability being excessive.

Attempt little : remembering the immense knowledge that it requires to live wisely. Observe that men of three-score and upwards say that they are just beginning to understand the world well enough to commence living in it : and ask yourself whether this is a place, or human beings the people, who can venture to attempt much.

Avoid delicacy. A delicate, refined man, who cannot ask for his due, cannot put forward his just claims, cannot say that he wants anything, or cannot say it with sufficient persistence and frequency—cannot make himself visible and prominent at the right time, though he knows the right time—may be a beautiful product of creation, very loveable, very much to be admired : but he must be content with being this beautiful product, and not presume to think that he will ever make any advance upon his original condition in life. This earth is not for the refined. They cannot expect to get anything in the

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*c'est le grand secret des existences fortes et créatrices,—oublier à la manière de la Nature, qui ne se connaît point de passé, qui recommence à toute heure les mystères de ses infatigables enfantements."*

scuffle that is going on. You all remember the well-known story of Lord Thurlow ! how, whenever a bishopric was vacant, he always said to the King, "Please your Majesty, I have a brother," until at last George the Third (a man not without persistency himself) was tired of hearing this cuckoo exclamation from his Chancellor, and gave a bishopric to the brother. Again, in business it often happens that a man is too delicate to ask a question, which ought to be asked, which he knows ought to be asked, which he longs to ask ; and his not asking this question is for ever a detriment to him—perhaps, his ruin.

The question of intimacy with others enters into considerations of self-advancement. Intimate friends nearly always injure you : yet it is tempting to have a friend, and it would be very useful to have one, if friends were not as careless as they often are in damaging your reputation. The man who studies self-advancement may have, nay should have, many persons with whom he has a certain intimacy, but there should be that distance between them at which respect is most sure to be maintained. We all under-estimate those whom we know best, and keep our choicest civilities, sometimes even our best benefits, for those who are comparatively unknown to us, and who, therefore, have most estimation with us, and most repute. I will admit, for I am not a pedantic layer down of maxims, like some people (Now should I have said this disrespectful thing if I had not been an intimate friend of these "some people?")—I will admit, that a

refined and delicate man may indulge in an intimate friendship. He is sure not to say the right thing, at the right time, for himself. But the man who can speak up for himself can do without intimate friends. [Oh ! Oh ! and murmurs of disapprobation from all the company.]

I do not care about these murmurs. They will not affect the jury, for my jurymen are to be chosen from men of the world, seeking advancement.

Next to the question of friends comes that of agents. In one respect, I think, they may be trusted largely. That is, as to their fidelity. There is much less mischief done by faithlessness in agents than is generally supposed. But you cannot overrate too much the chances of their neglecting to do what you have told them.<sup>1</sup> You must follow up, through all its stages, any business that you wish to be sure of succeeding. Constant and tiresome inquiries must be made, as to whether the thing is done that you have ordered to be done. I knew all this before, but I re-learnt it from M. Thiers. He has somewhere or other described his conduct when making preparations for war—How he believed in nothing without sufficient

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<sup>1</sup> "How entirely all things depend upon the mode of executing them, and how ridiculous mere theories are ! My successor thought, as half the world always thinks, that a man in command has only to order, and obedience will follow. Hence they are baffled, not from want of talent, but from inactivity, vainly thinking that while they spare themselves every one under them will work like horses." (Sir Charles J. Napier.)

evidence : and how he required vouchers and receipts at every stage of the proceedings, to prove to his own satisfaction that his orders had been faithfully transmitted, and exactly executed. There was no distant point of the web that did not tremble to his touch. He never quitted hold of the great affairs before him: "at last," he says, "my very dreams were administrative." That is the way in which war should be prepared for : and let me tell you, something of the same spirit should enter into the conduct of all affairs that are worth conducting at all.

But the difficulty of difficulties, and the thing that requires an imaginative supervision, is the joining of different kinds of work together, so that no time or substance be lost. I prefer to illustrate this by very common household matters, though I might have taken the greatest affairs of nations to exemplify my text. You have some work of building, or repairing, on hand. Men of different kinds of handicraft must be employed on it. The mason is doing his work, but is thinking of no other kind of handicraft. The carpenter is doing his, but remains oblivious that there are any other artisans but carpenters in the world. Meanwhile the blacksmith has received imperfect orders, or is not observed in the execution of complete orders. The end is, that the whole work stands still at a critical period for want of some bolts, or bars, or iron girders. Every country gentleman will feel the force of this illustration. Every general ought to appreciate it still more feelingly. But the same kind of mistiming, and the same deficiency of arrange-

ment are visible right through all human affairs ; and efficiency in a first-rate subordinate is never so well tested as by observing how he contrives that the work, to use a builder's phrase, should "follow on." "Armies whole have sunk" not so much in "Damietta's bog," as they have fallen to perdition through the interstices of ill-contrived arrangement. The bolts and bars are not there. Time is lost. Opportunity, more coy than any maiden, is also lost ; and a vast and costly apparatus comes to nought for want of the right thing—often a small thing—at the right time and place. The man who should prevent this is generally not a hopeful person ; but is inclined to believe that everything will go wrong, and that almost everything will be too late. Such a subordinate is sure of success, if there is any attention paid to merit ; and the man who employs him is also sure of success in any business which requires the supervision of such a subordinate.

I have too long detained my hearers, my approving hearers, upon the mere modes of action. I now pass to a much more important branch of my subject. Those who wish for self-advancement should remember, that the art in life is not so much to do a thing well, as to get a thing that has been moderately well done largely talked about. Some foolish people, who should have belonged to another planet, give all their minds to doing their work well. This is an entire mistake. This is a grievous loss of power. Such a

method of proceeding may be very well in Jupiter, Mars, or Saturn, but is totally out of place in this puffing, advertising, bill-sticking part of creation. To rush into the battle of life without an abundance of kettle-drums and trumpets is a weak and ill-advised adventure, however well-armed and well-accounted you may be. As I hate vague maxims, I will at once lay down the proportions in which force of any kind should be used in this world. Suppose you have a force which may be represented by the number one hundred : seventy-three parts at least of that force should be given to the trumpet ; the remaining twenty-seven parts may not disadvantageously be spent in doing the thing which is to be trumpeted. This is a rule unlike some rules in grammar, which are entangled and controlled by a multitude of vexatious exceptions ; but it applies equally to the conduct of all matters on earth, whether social, moral, artistic, literary, political, or religious.

I now proceed to speak about the qualities that should be in a man, and that he should sedulously cultivate, in order to ensure self-advancement. In reality, however, it is not the individual qualities, but the combination of them, and the proportion they bear one to another, that make the complete man. The reason why in such matters maxims fail in doing much is, that, if adopted at all, they are not adopted harmoniously and bound together in due proportions, so that you have the plums, and the flour, and the water, and the spice, but in the end, a very indifferent plum-pudding. To lay down rules,

though, about this combination and proportion is beyond my art. Like other writers of essays, I can only impart my wisdom bit by bit, and nature must always be left to make the exquisite admixture which is needful.

In the first place, the man who wishes for self-advancement must be industrious. This seems a commonplace remark, but is not so. It is imagined, for instance, that any clever man can get up a subject very quickly. This is all a delusion, and we lawyers are the people who have especially deluded mankind in this matter. They see us crammed, as they suppose, overnight, or early in the morning before going into court, with the details of a subject, and they suppose that a similar thing can be done in any other department of human life; but they forget that a law case when it comes for adjudication is often a very limited and narrow affair; and they also forget that these details, which they see supplied to us at the last moment, fall into the right places in our minds—the places prepared for them by long previous study and experience. My man who is to succeed must not only be industrious, but, to use an expression of a learned friend of mine, he must have “an almost ignominious love of details.” Look at the House of Commons for an exemplification of this maxim. Without immense industry no sure abiding success is obtained. It is in vain that you cram a man with the details for a speech. In the first place, he never has the confidence to use them well and heartily, and in the next you prepare him to hit in a certain direction, say, straight forward, and all

the telling blows of the adversary come sideways—a mode of attack for which the unhappy cramped man is in no way prepared.

Next to industry comes promptness. Lord Bacon has well noticed that the men whom powerful persons love to have about them, are ready men—men of resource. The reason is obvious. A man in power has perhaps thirty or forty decisions to make in a day. This is very fatiguing and perplexing to the mind. Any one, therefore, who can assist him with ready resource and prompt means of execution, even in the trifling matters of the day, soon becomes an invaluable subordinate, worthy of all favour.

Next to promptness comes a certain limitation of view, which is very needful to the man who would succeed. Human affairs are provided for from day to day. The man who sees too widely is nearly sure to be indecisive, or to appear so. Hence, also, comes an appearance, sometimes of shuffling, and sometimes of over-subtlety, which is very harmful to a man. There is a delusion, too, in this width of purview. You see the extent of horizon, but do not make out the roads. You think you know more than you do ; while your knowledge is rather that of a landscape-painter than of a general. I would advise you to know very clearly and accurately the ground close about you ; remembering, with regard to the distance, that wise French proverb, which declares that nothing is certain to happen but the unforeseen.

But the best reason for being limited in your views is



that other people are limited, and that you do not act in harmony with them if you are very far sighted. I would not, however, speak against far-sightedness, if a man who possesses it would only know on what occasions to keep it to himself.

I am now going to say something which may appear inconsistent with what I have previously said. I cannot help that : it is true ; and the right selection and combination of my sayings must be made by a judicious person. One maxim is good now, another maxim good then : and the “ now ” and the “ then ” come within the undescribed—perhaps undescribable—province of common sense. I have moralised upon the swiftness with which time passes. I have urged the seizing of every opportunity that can be seized. But, at the same time, it must be remembered that the man who studies self-advancement judiciously, must know how to wait. There are occasions and positions in life in which every move will be a bad one. It requires great self-command at such junctures to pause, and wait ; especially for an energetic man who is used to action. But he must learn the wisdom of doing nothing—the only wisdom left him in such cases to act upon, or rather to be passive upon. I have no doubt that, in support of this view, I might quote largely from Machiavelli and Guicciardini ; but a man of the world will not need the authority of these gentlemen with long names to convince him of the truth and importance of my proposition. Let him only be able to apply it.

Of course, my hero must be egotistic ; but his egotism must be of a peculiar kind. It must not be tiresome. It must be useful egotism, that can be worked into something. I would say to such a man :—Be modest in speech about your merits, but not in demands that may further your fortunes.

Finally, if I must make a combination of the kind of qualities which my hero should possess, I should describe him thus. He should be industrious, hard, prompt, frank, self-sufficing, and somewhat unrefined. I say “somewhat” unrefined advisedly. For if he have not some refinement, he will have no tact ; and will not from slight indications understand what men think and mean and feel, but must be content to judge of them by what they say, which gives but a small insight into the ways of mankind. His purposes must be few and clear. Numbers of clever men who could do anything never make up their minds distinctly as to what they want, or what they intend to be. Often they want inconsistent things. How can such men expect to succeed ? He should have a certain joyous superficiality of character which prevents ill-success from affecting him too deeply ; for there will be plenty of ill-success even in the most prosperous career. After all, he must not care too deeply about the world, if he is to use it wisely and skilfully. Lastly, he must be brave and bold, for civil affairs need fully as much bravery as those of the sword ; and a bold brave man may be defeated, but is seldom utterly discomfited, or his affairs put to fatal rout. Industrious and resolute as a Scotch-

man, cautious and observant as a wild Indian, cool and brave as an English soldier marching up, under orders, to a battery, he will not fail to succeed in any department of life—provided always he keeps for the most part to one department, and does not attempt to conquer in many directions at once. I only hope that, having profited by this wisdom of mine, he will give me a share of the spoil.

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*Milverton.* Well, of all the intolerable wretches and blackguards—

*Mr. Midhurst.* A conceited prig, too !

*Dunsford.* A wicked, designing villain !

*Ellesmere.* Any more : any more ? Pray go on, gentlemen ; and have you, ladies, nothing to say against the wise man of the world that I have depicted.

*Mildred.* There are some truths, though, in the essay—for instance, when Sir John said that men's vanity was unconscionable.

*Blanche.* I did not understand much about the essay, but I saw that the hero was always to be base, and I am sure my cousin would not approve of any part of it.

*Ellesmere.* I have now collected all your suffrages, and I see clearly, what I suspected before, that a man who keeps to his subject is not likely to have his lucubrations well received in this company. Did I say that my hero, as Miss Blanche calls him, was a good man, or a great man, or a noble man ? I merely said he would know how to get on in the world. I have given you a series of opinions, the like to which, if they had been pronounced upon law cases, would have produced not less than seven hundred and fifty-three guineas. I have given them to you for nothing, and

it is a lesson to me for the future not to give anything for nothing. Indeed I shall add that maxim to any future edition of my essay.

*Mr. Midhurst.* There was a sentence in it that might have been one of those quotations you threatened us with from Machiavelli.

*Milverton.* Why, it was all Machiavelli from beginning to end. Does not that respectable gentleman say, that his model Prince should be part man, part beast;<sup>1</sup> at any rate that he should know how to use the beast nature, a precept which is shadowed forth, he says, in the fable that Achilles and other princes of antiquity were brought up by the centaur Chiron? Ellesmere's model man would, I am sure, have delighted Machiavelli.

*Ellesmere.* A worthy man that, not appreciated by his own age, or any succeeding age. Like me, he kept to his subject, and suffered accordingly—but the sentence, Mr. Midhurst?

*Mr. Midhurst.* Give me the paper. (*Reads:*) “Do not indulge in loves, or hatreds; but if you must indulge in these unprofitable passions—choose the hatreds.”

*Ellesmere.* Well, that is sound doctrine—sound in the main at least; for perhaps I should have said, that he might indulge in a few judicious hatreds, as I have known instances where a man has decidedly lost ground with the

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<sup>1</sup> “Pertanto ad un principe è necessario saper bene usare la bestia e l'uomo. Questa parte è stata insegnata a' principi copertamente dagli antichi scrittori, i quali scrivono come Achille, e molti altri di quelli principi antichi furono dati a nutrire a Chirone Centauro, che sotto la sua disciplina li custodisse; il che non vuole dire altro l'aver per precettore un mezzo bestia e mezzo uomo, se non che bisogna ad un principe sapere usare l'una e l'altra natura, e l'una senza l'altra non è durabile.”—MACHIAVELLI, vol. v. *Il Principe*. Cap 18. “In che modo i principi debbono osservare la fede.”

world by being always kind and placable. I have seen such in political life.

*Milverton.* You are mistaken, Ellesmere. There are no judicious hatreds, but there are such things as judicious outbursts of indignation.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, now we come to the real Machiavelli. There is the man.

*Blanche.* Leonard, do take the taste away from us of his dreadful essay. Repeat to them that bit of the *Laodamia* which you were quoting to me as we came along. Mr. Ellesmere's perfect man of the world will not, I fancy, in any future region rise to that height.

*Dunsford.* Wait a minute, my dear. I should like to hear the *Laodamia* too; but I must make a remark first about the essay.

Pre-eminent amongst the many atrocious things which Ellesmere has brought forward in this essay of his was the statement that he made about the use of the trumpet, and about a man's giving his principal attention not to doing a thing, but to getting it talked about.

*Blanche.* Shocking!

*Mildred.* Horrible!

*Mr. Midhurst.* Disgusting!

*Milverton.* Oh, it was only his fun.

*Ellesmere.* It was not his fun. It was his most earnest earnestness. Suppose a mountebank, on entering a town, were to make known his coming confidentially, in choice English, to the principal inhabitants only—would anybody buy his wares, I ask?

*Dunsford.* I did not know that you were speaking entirely of mountebanks.

*Ellesmere.* Not entirely; but take horsemanship, in which something laborious and adroit is accomplished. Would anybody come to see the Circus, if the Circus people entered the town in a quiet, easy, gentlemanly

manner, instead of with kettle-drums and trumpets, seated in state, on a car with sixteen piebald horses, which stops up the way, and compels everybody to be aware that the unrivalled performers "who very lately had the honour of attending Her Majesty at Windsor" have just arrived, "to stay one night only," in the little town of Sleepy-Scandal. As for you, benevolent, high-minded, puff-despising block-heads and blockheadesses, whom I have the honour of addressing, you porcine creatures before whom pearls are being strewn in vain, you would starve, you would not even have roots to eat, if you had your living to get, and were to set about doing so in your high-minded, dispuffative fashion.

*Mr. Midhurst.* There is one thing in the way of puffing which I never get used to ; and that is the "*claqueurs*" in a French theatre, whose applause is regulated by the most careful pre-arrangement.

*Dunsford.* Friends of the author, I suppose ?

*Ellesmere.* You innocent creature ! No ; they are hired people. They are there every night. I suppose you have been to a French play ?

*Dunsford.* Yes : and, now I think of it, I do remember noticing that their applause used to break off abruptly ; but then I imagined it was because the French had a higher feeling for art than we have, and took good care not to interrupt their actors.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The most amusing instance of puffery I know, and which always sets me off laughing when I think of it, is that of which some pill manufactory is accused. In the open shop you see a line of people busily making up these pills in boxes, and sealing the covers with an anxious rapidity, as if the orders were unlimited, and as if poor humanity could not exist a moment longer without its due supply of pills. Then, underground, they tell me, there is another line of persons who are as busily employed in undo-

ing these packages, and throwing the pills back into barrels. This is very humorous. *Se non è vero è ben trovato.*

*Ellesmere.* Now the puffery that tickles me is of a more gentlemanly and diplomatic kind. You enter a room where there is a picture for exhibition, perhaps a work of real merit ; but still they call in the aid of puffery. You observe a gentlemanly person who comes hastily into the room, looks anxiously at the picture, and regrets that it will not be exhibited for more than three days longer. Or he is very eager to purchase an engraving of the picture, hearing that there are not many to be had now. Perhaps if you were to come again a few hours hence, you would find the same individual rushing in and making the same remarks in exactly the same language. I suppose it would be too expensive to pay a man who could vary his language. But the device is highly comical, I think.

All these stories tend to prove my assertion, that the trumpet must be largely and loudly blown. I would rest my argument on this solid ground : if bad things require to be puffed ; how much more must good things ? I heard Dunsford mention once in a sermon that whatever is bad has an attraction for mankind. If then, this innate attractiveness cannot be relied upon, and you must still have the aid of puffing, what would become of that which is naturally repulsive, because it is good, if you were foolish enough to leave it to make its way by its own merits only ?

*Dunsford.* Oh, you sophist !

*Milverton.* Now, good people, do not be afraid that I am going to join with Ellesmere, but what he has been saying has suggested something to me which I must impart to you. I do think with him that much force is often wasted by most of it being applied directly. The study, for instance, of times, seasons, and opportunities of putting forward anything is almost as requisite as study about the thing itself. Indeed, I would go farther, and am not afraid to say,

that if I cared for any reform very much, and it had to be advocated in Parliament, I would not, with my present knowledge of the world, as a young member, bring that subject prominently forward, especially if it were one distasteful to the public, but would seek to gain force and reputation in other ways, and bide my time as regards the reform I had most at heart.

*Mr. Midhurst.* What a long way off Milverton has led us from Ellesmere's pleasant and ironical baseness.

*Ellesmere.* I repudiate Milverton's assistance, and I deny Mr. Midhurst's "pleasantry and irony." I say that puffing, and advertising, and managing the world about the reception of the thing you want to get received, are half the battle. I suppose I must remind you for the hundredth time, that I am not drawing the picture of a perfect man, but of a man who is to get on in the world—in this imperfect, earthy, dirty world.

*Milverton.* Of course there is a great deal of truth in what Ellesmere says.

*Ellesmere.* You are the only fair person of all my audience.

*Milverton.* But this fact (I do not mean that I am a fair person, but that puffing does so much) makes it only more requisite that men in power should endeavour to further the unpuffed man, and to look well into the untrumpeted work of art, the not highly-connected project, and the device that has few influential friends.

*Ellesmere.* That may be. That is a wise and very just corollary from my proposition, but does not in the least diminish its validity. The truth is, Dunsford, that if you should ever publish this essay of mine, it is the only part of your book which men of the world will take the trouble of reading. They will pretend to have read the rest, because it is always creditable to have read a dull book, and the duller the more creditable. But my pages will be the dogs-



eared ones; except of course in the copies that belong to girls, clergymen, philanthropists, and other good sort of simple, weak-minded people, whom nobody would care to have as readers of his work.

*Milverton.* Now about the style of the essay: I really must say something on that head. Ellesmere has so often criticised my style, that now, when "the whirligig of Time has brought round its revenges," I should be more than mortal if I were to refrain from saying something a little disagreeable. The sentences seemed to come upon one, like, as I imagine, shot would descend from a shot-making tower—little, round, hard, unconnected things. There was a want, if I may venture to say so, of what Horace would call "crafty joinings" (*callida junctura*). It was not an essay so much as a speech. At one time he seemed to be addressing us: at another, his self-advancing scoundrel: at another, his shot were aimed at anybody or nobody. Then his quotations came in like the references of lawyers to cases; and Thiers, Thurlow, Sir Walter Scott, Mrs. Malaprop, and Lord Peterborough were alluded to, just as he would have quoted *Robinson v. Smith* (Simon's Reports); or *Jones v. Jones* (Brown's Chancery Cases); and so on.

*Ellesmere.* I disdain to reply to this revengeful criticism. I told you before that I did not wish to become a classic; and I am glad to see that, in the opinion of so good a judge, I have no chance of becoming one. Answer my arguments if you can, and do not comment on the form in which they are conveyed.

*Milverton.* There certainly are some good things in the essay.

*Ellesmere.* Good things in it! I believe there are, and such as you, of all men, might profit by. Indeed I put in one or two of them on purpose for you, you ungrateful man. You desire power, do you not? You will never get it unless you change very much. Once in power, you will be

unscrupulous enough. I do not mean anything offensive. I mean that you would make and accept conclusions rapidly and decisively, that you would indulge in compromises, and be contented like the rest of us with the second and third best instead of foolishly aiming at a fancied perfection. But in getting to power you would be as scrupulous as a tender-hearted girl. As a friend I like you the better for this; as a man of the world, I despise you, sir. If you were to canvass a constituency, you would bring out all the points of difference instead of slurring these points over judiciously. If they were raging for the Ballot, you would sedulously point out all the dangers and difficulties of the measure, and even be inclined to conceal any favourable opinion that you might have of any of its bearings. Good creatures such men may be (you may observe that the word "creature" is always applied contemptuously), but you are despicable as politicians.

*Milverton.* Ellesmere seems to be thoroughly imbued with the notion contained in that Eastern proverb—"The meanest of reptiles are found on the tops of the highest pillars." Now I do not believe that that proverb applies to the West so strongly.

*Ellesmere.* Well you must admit, however, that there should be a little judicious slime expended in mounting.

*Dunsford.* I could not help thinking all the time that Ellesmere was enumerating his various subtle basenesses, of the great saying, "Heaven is probably a place for those who have failed upon earth."

*Ellesmere.* No doubt there are many pretty sayings in vogue with the unsuccessful. I do not find, however, that they make use of these sayings until they *have* failed.

*Dunsford.* I interrupted you, Blanche, some time ago, when you were asking your cousin to quote a stanza from the *Laodamia*. It would come in well now.

*Milverton.*

- “ He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel  
 In worlds whose course is equable and pure ;  
 No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—  
 The past unsighed for, and the future sure ;  
 Spake of heroic arts in graver mood  
 Revived, with finer harmony pursued ;
- “ Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there  
 In happier beauty ; more pellucid streams,  
 An ampler ether, a diviner air,  
 And fields invested with purpureal gleams ;  
 Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day  
 Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.”

*Ellesmere.* Well, there is one thing, Milverton, I do envy you ; but it is not an accomplishment which my man of the world will be anxious to possess. Indeed I shall not let him have it. It is the power of quoting from memory all manner of beautiful bits—or what, at least, you suppose to be beautiful bits—of poetry and prose.

*Milverton.* I have all my life made a point of learning by heart the few things in any author which I exceedingly admire. They are to me great possessions ; and sometimes, when I am travelling alone, I pass the greater part of a day in taking stock, as commercial men would say—in seeing what I do know and can accurately repeat. I daresay they are by no means the most beautiful extracts from the respective authors. Indeed, I am almost sure they are not ; but they are those that have pleased my fancy, or captivated my affections ; and, as I have not seen reason to dismiss any of them from my mind, I suppose they were sincerely adopted—I mean they were such as specially pleased me, and not such as I was told to admire.

*Blanche.* How delightful it would be, if we were to pass a morning in questioning you, and seeing what you had learnt by heart in remarkable authors !

*Ellesmere.* We should certainly find out all his weaknesses ; we know a good many of them already. However, if Milverton would consent to be a talking book of elegant extracts for the nonce, it would not be a very disagreeable way of spending time, and it would get rid of the taste (I thank you, Miss Blanche, for that choice and gracious metaphor) of my essay, which, I can see, is odious to all of you, and the more so, because you must feel that you are persons for whom it is especially requisite to study my injunctions. If you had attended to them earlier in life, Dunsford would now be Mr. Dean ; Milverton would be the Right Honourable Leonard Milverton, and the leader of a party : Mr. Midhurst would be chief cook to the Emperor Napoleon ; the bull-dog would have been promoted to the parlour ; I, but no man is wise for himself, should have been Lord Chancellor ; Walter would be at the head of his class without having any more knowledge than he has at present ; and, as for you two girls, one would be a Maid of Honour to the Queen, and the other would have married the richest man in the county.

*Dunsford.* Should we have been any happier ?

*Ellesmere.* There you are off again into space. Did I pretend, my good man, to write a sermon ? Did I say that my hero would be a hero at all, that is in your sense of the word ? I merely meant him to be a person to get on in the world. But really, without intending any especial offence to the present company, there is not more than one man out of two thousand five hundred and thirty-seven who keeps to the point ; and all of you belong to the two thousand five hundred and thirty-six who do not. However, we will quit the subject. It will be far more pleasant now to exercise that quoting-machine, Milverton. Let the boy have his turn first. Now, Walter, you are probably aware that your father has read every stupid book in the world, and knows the stupidest bits in each of them by heart.

*Walter.* No: they are not the stupidest; they are the best.

*Ellesmere.* Well, Walter, if they are, you need not hit me so hard in the abdominal regions to prove it. But you are quite as logical and rational as the rest of the company. How the little imp sticks up for his father, right or wrong! What will you have, Walter?

*Walter.* I should like a bit of *Robinson Crusoe*.

*Milverton.* "It was on a Friday, the twenty-fourth of June, that, having now completed my hut, and laid up a store of yams and birds' eggs, I walked down upon the sea-shore. It was very hot, and the shade from the palm-trees was very scant. I little thought, when I was an apprentice boy at Bristol, where I first saw a dried palm-leaf, that these trees would be my chief companions, indeed, I may say, my only friends. The large turtles crawled away from me, and I was too idle to follow them, though I thought how many a Bristol merchant, even the mayor, Sir John Wishart, had never given so ample and succulent a repast to his friends as he would have done if any of these noble reptiles had been brought over in one of his ships. At this moment I turned to retrace my steps, when I discerned a track in the sand. My heart began to beat violently. It could not be my own footsteps, for——"

*Walter.* I do not remember any of this in the book, Papa.

*Milverton.* Nor I, my dear. I was only inventing. I will not attempt to deceive you any more; for the truth, I am ashamed to say, is that I do not remember any of my *Robinson Crusoe* accurately.

*Ellesmere.* Hurrah! A break-down at the first start! Now, Dunsford, you are the next youngest; at least the next in innocency;—may we say, in viridity?

*Dunsford.* Well, I like the poetry that was poetry in my time. I should like a bit of Pope—a long bit.

*Milverton.*

“ The darksome pines that o’er yon rocks reclined  
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
The wand’ring streams that shine between the hills,  
The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze :  
No more these scenes my meditations aid,  
Or lull to rest the visionary maid :  
But o’er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Long-sounding aisles and intermingled graves,  
Black melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dread repose :  
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
Shades every flower and darkens every green,  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

*Dunsford.* Beautiful ! beautiful !

“ And breathes a browner horror on the woods.”

Where will you beat that, sir ?

*Ellesmere.* I am the next youngest. Give us a bit of Churchill. That will rather puzzle you, I think.

*Milverton.* I think not.

“ ’Tis not the babbling of an idle world,  
Where praise and censure are at random hurled,  
That can the meanest of my thoughts control,  
Or shake one settled purpose of my soul,  
Free and at large might their wild curses roam  
If all, if all, alas, were well at home.”

*Ellesmere.* Upon my word they are very good. Now let us have a bit of Dr. Johnson—not his poetry, though. I protest against *Irene*.

*Milverton.* “ The prince desired a little kingdom in which he might administer justice in his own person, and see all the parts of government with his own eyes ; but he could

never fix the limits of his dominions, and was always adding to the number of his subjects.

"Imlac and the astronomer were contented to be driven along the stream of life without directing their course to any particular port.

"Of these wishes that they had formed they well knew that none could be obtained. They deliberated awhile what was to be done, and resolved, when the inundation should cease, to return to Abyssinia."

*Ellesmere.* You being juvenile, Walter, have an unlimited supply of audacity. Ask your father to give us something of his own—a favourite bit of his writing.

*Milverton.* With pleasure: I would not let modesty hinder for a moment my endeavours to oblige this company, especially Ellesmere. Let me think for a minute or two, and I shall be able, perhaps, to remember something.

"It might be a dream, it might be more than a dream, but, methought, that I wandered like another Dante conducted by another Virgil, and came upon regions not depicted in the awful poem of the great Florentine. My mind, abjuring gloomier scenes, dwells upon one in which Comedy was strangely mingled with Tragedy. The place itself was not lugubrious. There were pleasant plains, grassy hillocks, tinkling rivulets, trees like our trees, and other trees totally unlike the trees of earth, but showing innumerable fantasies unknown to us, of leaf, of bud, of blossom. One peculiarity marked the scene, and rendered it different from all that I had hitherto beheld. Everywhere the land was divided by innumerable boundaries, sometimes of lava stones, sometimes of trellised vines, sometimes of the forked aloe; and smaller portions were divided again by glittering ropes. The whole landscape, which otherwise would have been gracious and beautiful, was deformed by landmarks.

"A people of acute countenance, ready speech, and

trouble ever in their anxious eyes, occupied these regions. I could not but note that their gaze was never at the landscape, but always fixed upon these boundaries. Their demeanour to each other was most strange. They did not dwell apart, but seemed most eager for companionship. They were for ever accosting each other; but, after a few minutes' conference, they separated from each other with looks of disgust and aversion. These movements were repeated so often as to present the appearance of a regulated dance. After watching them till I began to grow dizzy, I turned with looks of bewilderment to my conductor.

"He smiled for the first time; and, sighing, said, 'All these, my friend, were lawyers upon earth, and this is the Purgatory of Lawyers. Each spirit longs to promote a suit, and believes that he has one entrusted to him. Each spirit believes that he is liable to a suit, and dreads with a horror unknown, except to Lawyers, the expenses and the worry of the suit. They confer together, as you see; each thinks that he has found a client, and begins to talk with earnestness and volubility of the other's cause that is soon coming on. After a few moments each finds that he is not meeting with a client, but with another lawyer wishing to undertake his affairs, and in a state of happy volubility about the other's lawsuit. They separate, as you behold, with undisguised disgust upon their countenances. For ages they will commingle together in this dread dance of law; but never will any one meet with the one he wishes to detain, for no client will ever enter these eternal regions of discord about nothing. Endlessly fleeing from law on their own behalf, endlessly seeking for law on behalf of others, they pass their time in eager pursuit and utter discomfiture.'"

You do not wish for any more, do you, Ellesmere?

*Ellesmere.* I have had quite enough! This kind of vulgar prejudice against the defenders of property has



been common in all ages—and is as ungrateful as it is common.

*Milverton.* I must confess it is a great shame in me to say anything against lawyers, for my best friends are lawyers, but one cannot help having some fun sometimes about their ways of going on; and certainly it is amusing to observe the horror that lawyers themselves have of law. A humorous friend of mine, who is always getting up imaginary companies, says that nothing would pay like a company for instituting frivolous suits against great lawyers. He has made out his calculations, and asserts that fifty thousand a year is to be derived in this way from the Chancery bar alone.

*Ellesmere.* I am persuaded that Milverton keeps these little bits of pleasant fiction ready in his mind to fire off upon me. He never wrote that dream of his, and he could not have been so glib with it, if it were entirely new to him.

I know this, that if clients complain of their lawyers, lawyers may sometimes complain of their clients. I have received a letter this morning, from which I can dimly make out that there is something which I ought to do, or ought not to do, but which of the two I cannot tell, for the whole letter is a hopeless puzzle of intemperate scratches, ending with a wild flourish by way of signature.

*Mr. Midhurst.* There are two things which Milverton ought to have dwelt upon in his essay on "Worry," and which, knowing his aversion to both of them, I expected to hear something about—unpunctuality and bad writing.

*Milverton.* It is certainly astonishing to see how very few people write legibly. I can't think how it is that bad writers make up their minds to lose so much force as they do by bad writing. If you address anything to a correspondent, you want him to understand it at once. You want it to come with its full force upon his mind. Accordingly, if you write a word badly, you had better erase it, and write the word over again carefully. You do not wish

your friend to puzzle over what you are imparting to him. Bad writers cannot now plead great examples for bad writing. It is a curious thing, but going back for a long period, you may notice that, with few exceptions, prime ministers have been remarkably good writers. Canning, I am told, wrote an exquisite hand; the Duke of Wellington a clear and noble one; Sir Robert Peel a most legible hand, a thought perhaps too mercantile for beauty, but still an excellent hand. Lord Palmerston's handwriting is a model of good penmanship: Lord John Russell's forcible and distinct; and I might continue to give a long list of eminent men who have not disdained to take much pains with their handwriting. I mention these statesmen because all of them had, or have, to write a great quantity in the course of most days, and might fairly be excused if they wrote badly.

I am sorry to condemn bad writing, for it hits some of my best friends very hard—men who seem to do everything well but their writing; and though in general I am not inclined to give up my friend Plato, whom I do know, for that abstraction called Truth,<sup>1</sup> whom I seldom have the pleasure of meeting in society; yet I must confess that bad handwriting is a blemish.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The strangest thing in the way of bad writing, which, however, is very frequent, is when a man indites the body of his letter with sufficient clerkly skill, but makes the signature what Ellesmere would call "a hopeless puzzle of intemperate scratches." The man is perhaps unknown to you, and you really do not know how to address him in reply.

*Milverton.* Yes, that is very absurd. But, the truth is, that, notwithstanding all the pains we are taking with education, there are three common things which are hardly ever

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<sup>1</sup> Milverton, of course, alluded to the old saying "Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica Veritas."

sufficiently attended to—reading, writing, and weighing and measuring.

How few people know how to read ! The bar, the senate, and the church show that. When any document is read in court, how badly for the most part it is given out. In private life, too, how little good reading there is.

I owe a great deal to my mother for having taught me to read. Week after week, month after month, she would exercise me for an hour or two every day in reading, bestowing the utmost care on the pronunciation of each word. The good lady probably thought, this boy will have tutors and schoolmasters who will teach him languages and mathematics and all manner of fine things, but none of them will teach him how to read. I will do that for him. And she had a great deal to do, for by nature I had much difficulty in pronouncing clearly. I am very grateful to her for the pains she took, and believe that most mothers could hardly devote themselves to a more important thing in the education of their children than teaching them to read. How much better than if she had taught me a little bad French with a strong English pronunciation, which I should have had to unlearn.

*Dunsford.* It is very true. I am well aware how much, as a clergyman, I lose from reading badly, as I know I do. I was never taught to read ; and no doubt it is a great art.

*Mr. Midhurst.* But what do you mean by what you said about weighing and measuring ?

*Milverton.* I mean what I said. Amongst all classes, and especially in the lower, there is next to no skill in weighing and measuring. If I were an Inspector of Schools, I would carry with me weights and scales and measures of all kinds. I would then read out some receipt for the girls and some problem for the boys ; produce my weights and measures with the materials to be weighed and measured ; and would have the weighing and measuring done before my eyes, to my satisfaction. Did you ever know a she-cook

who was sufficiently inclined to weigh and measure? Certainly not. They dislike doing a thing which they have never been practised to do.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Ah, this indeed is sensible—A Daniel come to an Inspectorship!

*Milverton.* Then, if in education we could add some knowledge of music—I mean of the scientific part of music, the principles of harmony, what accomplished creatures we should turn out. Think of a human being who can read his own language well, write legibly, do accounts well (that in all national schools they are wonderfully versed in at present), weigh and measure accurately, and appreciate, if not produce, harmony in music. Such a person would be sure to be useful, and would be good company anywhere. He would probably be able to speak out, an accomplishment at present of the rarest kind.

*Ellesmere.* Do not go any more into education. It is an interminable subject, and we have really talked enough for one day. We shall dislike one another if we talk much more. Besides, I mean to go on with my own education, and to get up three irregular verbs in German in the course of the day. I advise you all to do the same. There is no change of thought so pleasant for a man jaded with business as getting up even a little of a foreign language, if it be but enough to spell out a paragraph in a foreign newspaper. I always turn to the English news, and find it quite interesting to discover, by the aid of a pocket dictionary, from the *Cologne Gazette*, that the weather is rainy in England, that Prince Albert went out deer-stalking the other day, and that Sir Wood, by which I suppose they mean Sir Charles Wood, has given a sensible lecture to his constituents at Halifax. I can assure you I did not come to the knowledge of these facts yesterday without a good deal of hard work, and I value them accordingly.

Here we all rose, and the conversation was concluded.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ELLESMERE'S PLAN FOR A NEW ESSAY.

"I HAVE a great plan in my head," said Ellesmere to me one morning that we were pacing up and down the terrace in front of our hotel,—at Oberwesel, I think. By the way, how much I often pity Londoners because they so seldom enjoy these little bits of walks before and after breakfast, these welcomings of the bright morning and its beautiful odours, which we have in the country, and even in small towns.

"Well, what is your great plan, Ellesmere?" I replied: "some mischief, I suppose?"

"You must know," he answered, "that I am beginning to like this fat man immensely, and to see that there is a great deal in him. What a beautiful nature it is! How serenely he takes all my impertinence; not coldly, or superciliously, or, if I may say so, unappreciatingly, but simply, and with serenity, like a man who has seen and suffered much, and is not now to be further discomposed by anything, or anybody. How rich and flowing, too, his language is. To be sure, there is a good deal of unnecessary frill and ruffle, bagwig, diamond-hilted sword, and amplitude of laced waistcoat, as in the dress of our

grandfathers ; which I always like to see upon the stage, or at a fancy-ball, because somehow or other, it is associated with the peculiar idea that I attach to the word 'gentleman.' But still, notwithstanding the superfluous ornament, Midhurst talks remarkably well.

"Well, I vote that we try to get more than we do from our fat friend ; who, if you observe, mingles but shyly in our conversations, and often only after the rest of us have said our say. I propose that we should persuade him to write an essay, and I have already fixed upon the subject for him.

"You must have noticed what a quietly lugubrious view he takes of all human affairs. He must write us an elaborate essay upon the miseries of human life, in which, depend upon it, we shall get a great deal of the man's experience. Milverton shall be appointed to answer him. There are sufficient depths of melancholy in Milverton too ; but, if you observe, he never approves of anybody's melancholy but his own, and is always ready vigorously to defend the nature of things, if any one else presumes to attack it. On such occasions he is sure to be full of joys and hopes, of remedies and consolations. I can tell him he will need all the adroitness and subtlety he can muster to parry "the heavy blows and great discouragements" which our melancholy Falstaff, our Rasselas-Falstaff as I call him, in rounded, ample latinised, gorgeous sentences, will deal out upon the unfortunate human race.

"I will go from side to side, rather inclining to Milverton, because, even if he were to prove an equal anta-

gonist to our stout friend, the other has the least difficult branch of the argument to maintain. It is always easy to take a mournful view of life. One gloomy man will successfully depress a whole company of cheerfully disposed people. I once saw such a curious instance of that. I was honoured by being admitted to a party of hopeful philosophers, and they harangued splendidly upon the hopes and destinies of the human race, magnifying the great things that had been done in this generation, and prophesying still greater for the next. They themselves had some notable project for the said human race, which, when universally adopted, was to arrange everybody comfortably ever afterwards.

“There was one dissentient ; but, amidst the hubbub of hopeful people, his warning melancholy voice was lost. He bided his time. It was a fine evening, the glass doors were thrown open, and we walked out upon the balcony for a few moments, and looked up at the clear sky. There was a light wail heard in the distance, of some dreary ballad-monger. Now was the dissentient’s time. I forget what his exact words were, but he bade his friends look at the stars ; then he asked them to consider the littleness of man and his planet, and to contemplate the isolation of each world in the boundless realms of space. Then he spoke of the isolation of each human creature throughout life and in death. Though I forget his words, the impression made by them still remains upon me. Somehow or other, he contrived to get the immensities of creation on his side, as it were, and to strike a

note of sorrow which effectually quelled the joyous feelings of the company. Very unreasonably, I daresay. Milverton would have been sure to contend that there was far more of hope than of dismay in the grand scene that overarched us. But the others had to a certain extent talked themselves out; and, in short, the dismal man triumphed, as he generally will succeed in doing.

“For that reason I see I must incline a great deal to Milverton’s side of the argument. As for you, you must not preachify over much. Of course all things are right. The gloomy view, such at least as Mr. Midhurst will take, cannot, I think, be the sound one. At any rate, it is not the pious one. But you must not come in too soon with anything that will overwhelm them. We must hear what they will say, looking at the matter from a worldly point of view, or going no higher than natural religion.

“I take it for granted that in a previous conversation we can so play up to the subject as to bring in an opportunity for urgently requesting them to assume the parts we have assigned to them. Any two confederates can make talk go nearly as they please.”

I assented to Ellesmere’s plan, being somewhat curious to see how Mr. Midhurst would acquit himself. We did lead up the conversation in the way that Ellesmere had planned, and did, after some solicitation, being aided by the girls, succeed in persuading Mr. Midhurst and Milverton to undertake the parts we had resolved they should take. I pass over several slight conversations that occurred, and sundry journeyings which took place,



and will proceed at once to the reading of Mr. Midhurst's essay; which I remember was read on a lowering day (there is often good luck for these melancholy people), while we were sitting on the grass which deftly covers, without hiding, the form of the lower part of the ancient Roman amphitheatre at Trèves.

The following was our conversation as we walked from our hotel to the site of the amphitheatre.

*Ellesmere.* I have the greatest faith, as everybody knows, in the opinions of learned men like Dunsford, even when the learned men differ totally in opinion from one another. *A fortiori*, therefore, I am convinced that the chronology usually accepted by learned men must be right. If, however, I were to trust my own unassisted intellect, I should conclude, from what I have just observed at our *table-d'hôte*, that the world was at least five hundred and fifty-seven thousand two hundred and thirty-three years old. I am particular, gentlemen, about the last-named figure, the figure three, because I observe that all great chronologers are particular about the small figures.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Differing with Ellesmere in the small figures, I agree with him as regards the half-million. The world could never have come to its present state of folly in a few thousand years.

*Dunsford.* What is all this about? What do you mean, Ellesmere?

*Ellesmere.* The earliest records show, do they not, my learned friend, that salt was always a prime requisite with the human race? After the lapse of innumerable ages came salt-cellars; but you will still observe that, in several of the most civilised parts of the earth, the inhabitants have not yet arrived at the use of salt-spoons. You may travel

through the greater part of this large continent, beholding superb edifices and wondrous works of art, but without having the good fortune to meet with a single salt-spoon. Now, when you consider that these regions have been traversed constantly during the last thirty years by persons belonging to a nation so advanced in the arts of life that they habitually use salt-spoons, and who must often have mentioned this remarkable fact to the natives, I leave you to guess what time it must have taken for savages to have advanced from fingers to knives and forks.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I often feel a great pity for the intelligent people we are at present travelling amongst, when I reflect that not one of them has ever been in a bed, at least in his own country. For we cannot admit that the thing they call a bed is a bed.

*Ellesmere.* You will all come round to my views of chronology. One of the few sharp things that Milverton has said, when I have not been by to assist him, is—"What a wonderful inventor that man must have been who first contrived a wheel!" And I have no doubt that the sound, thriving, well-to-do people of his day maintained that he was a dangerous fool, that the church ought to see about burning him (you may be sure it did its duty), and that burdens might be much more safely and expeditiously carried on the back, or dragged along the ground, as they always had been. Now, shall we allow thirty thousand years for the gradual introduction of the wheel, considering how much there doubtless was to be said against it upon the good old principles of Church and State?

*Milverton.* You need not preach upon this text to me, Ellesmere. I have always been fully aware how much difficulty there is in getting anything done that is worth doing, any folly uprooted, any new and good invention introduced into common life. Despotism tends to prevent all growth. Freedom tends to make growth complicated

and most difficult. Now we think we have come to a very wonderful thing in having examinations for public offices.

*Ellesmere.* Well done, Milverton! He is sure to branch off in some unexpected manner, to try and turn my folly, as he would call it, to some account; though how salt-spoons should have suggested public examinations surpasses my comprehension.

*Milverton.* The transition was as natural as could be. From your salt-spoons we went to the difficulty of getting anything done, especially any new thing. From that my mind wandered, no (not wandered), proceeded naturally to sundry great public works that we English have in hand. I then thought of the choice of men to get these works accomplished; then, of our official system, and there I was at this new scheme of examinations.

Now I was observing some little time ago the conduct of an extensive affair; and something struck me which may be very obvious, but which had never occurred to me before in the conduct of business, or of life;—namely, that you not only require men of very different qualifications, but that the different qualifications should come in and be pre-eminent at different epochs of the affair. First, there is wanted the man of great methodical power, who can really make a plan. Then there is the man who sees difficulties—often an abounding nuisance when he comes in at the wrong time, or when he is concerned with the business throughout its whole career. But there is a time for him too, when he may be most useful. He is seldom anything else but a foreseer of difficulties. Then there is the man of details, who masters long strings of facts, who classifies, abridges, and prepares them for the comprehension of other minds. Then there is the out-of-doors enthusiast, who fights the battle amongst the people. Then there is the skilful and eloquent man who pushes the affair through assemblages of men. Before him I should perhaps have

named the practical man, who knows how far you can go in the enterprise, and how much other men, who care little or nothing about the subject, will endure of it : who, in a word, understands how to lop off from the enterprise all that is not absolutely necessary, and so to reduce and smooth the thing, that it encounters the least possible friction.

*Ellesmere.* Do not go on any more. You have proved to us that it is nearly impossible to do any new and great thing.

*Milverton.* Well, it does seem to be very difficult.

*Ellesmere.* And you were going to say that examinations may keep out ignorant fools, but cannot ensure the bringing in of fit men at the right time.

But now remember that we are to have Mr. Midhurst's essay this afternoon—that is why I treated you all to a bottle of what they call "real Johannisberg"—and remember Milverton, that you are to be on the hopeful and comfortable side, so you need not have begun by pointing out that improvement is difficult, and you ought rather to have maintained that it is a wonder, considering the intelligence of mankind, and their readiness to accept whatever is useful (see the reception of Stephenson's evidence before the first Railway Committee), that they have been anything like six thousand years in attaining to their present height of civilisation. You are, I fear, a careless advocate.

Hereupon we took our seats fronting the place where the Emperor or the Consul must have sat in former ages, and Mr. Midhurst began to read his essay, to which I must devote a new chapter.

## CHAPTER X.

### ON THE MISERIES OF HUMAN LIFE.

[MR. MIDHURST'S ESSAY.]

I AM dissatisfied with all the metaphors and similes that have been used by poets, philosophers, and priests, to illustrate the futile and miserable state of man upon the earth. The fly upon the wheel—the insect of a day (perhaps a sunny day—for the insect)—the generations of swiftly crumpling, withering, rotting leaves,—the flower that buds, and grows, and falls away, petal by petal, delicately, in the breeze—the smoke that rises, seen for a moment, and that, dissipating, goes, no man knows whither—the noxious vapour that soon vanishes away—are all of them too favourable emblems of the state of erring, short-lived, misguided, miserable man. These things and creatures fulfil a light and easy destiny, and cannot for a moment be compared to a creature of many griefs, of unutterable longings, dire responsibilities, and inadequate performances; to a creature who is sure to plan, and whose plans for himself are mostly sure to fail; who discerns what he cannot grasp; contemplates what he cannot understand, and yet pines to understand; who looks before and after, seeing on the one track

broken hopes, neglected occasions, defeated aspirations, unintended crimes, and misfortunes largely created by himself; and, on the other, time and reason to mourn over all the past miseries which he so well remembers and so bitterly deplores.

[*Ellesmere* (aside to me). If it goes on in this dolorous way, we shall have cause to mourn over the success of *our* plan.]

I might, after the fashion of Jeremy Taylor, moralise on the paltry life and common death of the highest, and might tell the story of Ninus the Assyrian, who wore a mitre, but is now a little heap of dust.<sup>1</sup> I might, on the other hand, dwell on the sordid wretchedness of the poor man, born amidst filth, with hunger and dirt for his play-

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<sup>1</sup> This is the passage to which Mr. Midhurst alluded :—

“Ninus the Assyrian had an ocean of gold, and other riches more than the sand in the Caspian Sea ; he never saw the stars, and perhaps he never desired it ; he never stirred up the holy fire among the Magi, nor touched his god with the sacred rod according to the laws ; he never offered sacrifice, nor worshipped the Deity, nor administered justice, nor spake to his people, nor numbered them : but he was most valiant to eat and drink ; and having mingled his wines, he threw the rest upon the stones. This man is dead : behold his sepulchre, and now hear where Ninus is. Sometimes I was Ninus, and drew the breath of a living man, but now am nothing but clay. I have nothing but what I did eat, and what I served to myself in lust (that was and is all my portion) : the wealth with which I was (esteemed) blessed, my enemies meeting together shall bear away, as the mad Thyades carry a raw goat. I am gone to hell ; and when I went thither I neither carried gold, nor horse, nor silver chariot. I that wore a mitre, am now a little heap of dust.”—*Holy Dying*, chap. i. sec. 2.

mates, with stupid toil for the occupation of his manhood, and with enforced alms for the stay of his declining years. But these sharp contrasts savour of the melodrame ; and I prefer to abide in those safer regions where I can find the ordinary miseries of ordinary men, being quite secure of finding there ample materials to prove and illustrate my theme.

And first, look what a web of adverse circumstances most men are born into. Consider the ideas which are about them from their birth, often entirely wrong, and through which they have to get, late, and sadly torn and bruised, at the real laws of nature and of life. Even the common proverb does not make a man wise about his own health until past middle life ; and it is admitted that up to forty he may be no fool, and yet not old enough to be his own physician. Then—and this betrays a state of adverse circumstances that must have struck the most unobservant of mankind—reflect with dread upon the inordinate punishment attached to trifling errors or to light mischances, occurring even at the earliest and most immature periods of life. A man passes this way or that, seeing little difference between the pathways, or he crosses the road to speak to a friend, and he does something, or sees somebody, or meets with some little mishap, which slight circumstance of evil is for ever to grow bigger and bigger for him, and finally perhaps to overwhelm him. In the gaiety of his heart he trips down two steps at once, and is never the same man afterwards. His life is changed from an active to a passive and

studious one ; and, looking back, one cannot but admit that his whole career was at the mercy of that small and childish accident. Circumspection seems to be of little avail : indeed, it would require to be infinite. To use a fine image from Calderon, you bear about with you the burden of a buckler at your side for a whole year, but it is wanting on the very day when it might have afforded its master some protection.<sup>1</sup> I think, too, I have remarked that the little way-side pictures (set up in some countries to commemorate the accidents which have occurred on a line of road), with their rude inscriptions pathetically telling you to pray for the soul of the departed, or to offer up thanks to the Virgin Mary for the sufferer's deliverance from death, are not by any means to be most frequently met with at the most dangerous parts of the road, but at some point, perhaps, where the good waggoner or the devout peasant was going along in fancied security, oblivious of all harm. To sum the matter up, it seems as if man was in a world too powerful for him ; that he is never, to use a modern phrase, thoroughly "master of the situation." Hume, in one of his *Essays*, points out how much greater man would be, if he had a little more of any one good quality ; and he takes, as an

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<sup>1</sup> The passage from Calderon to which Mr. Midhurst alluded is no doubt the following, from the play *Mañana será otro Día* :

"No ha de decirse, que fui  
Conmigo, como el broquel,  
Que anda todo el año al lado,  
Y solo el día ha faltado,  
Que quieren servirse dél."—Jorn. 1.



instance, industry. But this is a delusion. It is always a little more, or a little less, that is wanting in the character of any man—the greatest—to make it harmonious, self-sufficing, and complete.

Consider again the proneness to evil, not only in man, but in everything about him, so that all his labour is uphill work that never ends. What is good cannot be left alone for a moment, but it rusts, or changes, or decays. And what is evil scarcely ever becomes less by being left alone. The world is like a great machine. On it goes, pounding away at its work, everywhere neglectful of or indifferent to the claims and the peculiarities of the individual, who thinks to flit by it, and merely to observe its movements, remaining himself in safety ; but the winds of circumstance flutter his garments, he is caught up by its cruel wheels, and ground into the forms that it is set to grind men into.

Then we talk of experience. What is experience but a fine word for suffering? The blunder that you have not made yourself you have not fully profited by ; and when you have fully profited, it is generally too late to turn the profit to account. Experience is mostly bought so dear, that there is no money left to buy anything else with.

Should there come a great man, look at the men and things he has to deal with, and wonder that great men have been able to do what little they have done. Consider the poverty of the characters that mostly surround such a man, their littlenesses, their weaknesses, their unaccountable and ever-present vanities.

Consider how many utterly unmanageable persons there are in the world. You cannot say they are madmen. You cannot say they are idiots. But rationality flickers about them in so strange a way that they are often more difficult to deal with than the utterly irrational. In every two or three households there is one such person who is a torment and a puzzle to the wiser ones, who have to try and guide him.

Then consider the affections. Remember the loneliness of life. We talk much of friendship ; and tomes have been written upon its loveliness, its rights, its duties, and its pleasures. But where are the friends to whom all this ponderous writing should apply ? A few bright names, so few that we may count them on our fingers, and some of them in fiction, will occur ; and they, at least, furnish examples for what has been written on friendship. David and Jonathan, Alexander and Hephæstion, Damon and Pythias, Nisus and Euryalus, with a few others, form the staple of our examples. But how rarely do we meet Nisus and Euryalus in the busy, scheming, self-absorbed, self-devoured world around us.

Then take love ; that which is believed to be, nay that which is, the perfect flower of human existence. To change the simile :—by love, as from a mirror, are reflected and brought back to a focus all the brightest feelings and the noblest aspirations of man's nature ; while, strange to say, from this magical mirror none of the bad qualities are reflected. Or they pass unheeded through it. But this is only for a time ; and, except in some

few happy instances, for a short time. Familiarity dulls the mirror. The bad qualities find a surface from which they are easily reflected ; the good qualities a surface which each day's tarnishing renders more unfit to reflect them. The magic brightness dies away ; and men and women, who had been in a seventh heaven of their own creating, return to careful, tiresome, ordinary, life again.

*Ellesmere.* I must interpose. I declare if ever I am in love, it will not be so with me. There will be no magic mirror, and no bright qualities reflected, and nobody shall be taken in by me.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The love of a shrewd lawyer, in large practice, verging on to middle life, is not likely to be of that magic character which I have described. There will be no brightness, and no seventh heaven. Such a prosaic affair does not come within the scope of my observations. It may, however, lead to sufficient misery. I resume my essay.

We have spoken of friendship and of love. If we consider the ordinary intercourse of life, my task will be still easier, for nobody will have the face to contend that such intercourse is not full to the brim of dulness, dissimulation, and formality. Mankind is like "a bag of serpents," as Mr. Carlyle well says, "in which each serpent is rearing his head and hissing, and struggling to get higher than the others." While I am speaking of companionship, I cannot help noticing how sad a thing it is that there is such a bar between the young and old, to prevent them from understanding each other. The young, who think that there is no difficulty in anything,

and that they will ultimately possess the whole world (each one of them does), can little appreciate the timidity and parsimony, often the result of such hard blows and containing so much self-denial and self-sacrifice, which are the portion of older minds. The sentiments of people of different ages jar upon each other; and it requires a constant exercise of loving imagination for the young and the old to understand and tolerate each other.

Then we come to knowledge. I must admit that that is something. But was any man ever satisfied with it? Did it ever prevent the feeling of loneliness in any man? Is it gained without large sacrifices? Look at the faded faces of men eminent for knowledge; and afterwards answer me that question.

I should be as tedious as a professed moralist were I to dwell upon the miseries caused by the greater passions which infest the human race. I need merely name envy, hatred, malice, and ambition. Think for one moment of the follies these passions are: think how undeserving of your hatred any human being is (though seemingly most prosperous) by reason of his smallness, his secret miseries, and the clouds of disaster which are sure at one time or other to thicken around him. No man is worth hating, or being envied, or being supplanted. But I scorn to dwell on this easy branch of my subject, which has already had vast libraries of bulky volumes devoted to it.

If, however, the greater passions of men could be satisfied, if the ambitious could be satisfied with the honours or the dignities they gain, if the loving could be satisfied

with the love they give or inspire, there would still remain the smaller and the meaner passions, which are alone sufficient to embitter great part of human existence.

Take jealousy for instance ; not the larger and more ferocious kind of jealousy, but that petty kind which is as omnipresent amongst mankind as the atmosphere. "Should I not have been the person to be entrusted with this work?" "Ought he not to have spoken to me first?" "Are not another's claims always preferred to mine?" "Was my name mentioned where it ought to have been in the despatches?" "Does the public know that I am the person who have most merit in this transaction?" "How shameful it is that this one or that one should be liked better than I am"—these, or something like these, are the questions which a mean jealousy prompts many a man to ask in the course of every few successive hours.

And the worst of it is, that nothing would satiate this jealousy. Those who are preferred are not not preferred enough ; and those who enjoy favour, watch with unutterable heart-burnings the rise of any newly-favoured person. These feelings are everywhere. I do not know much personally of the serene atmosphere of courts or cabinets or councils, but they are composed of men, and wherever there is an assemblage of men, there are sure to be the meanest rivalries. Few can see the beauty of being second or third in any career or occupation ; and everybody, looking upwards with hungry eyes, forgets the multitudes who are beneath him. I say then that these

mean passions are to be found in courts, camps, cabinets, colleges (for the learned and the wise have their jealousies too, not a whit less bitter than those of other people, as may be discovered by any one who has talked for half an hour with rival philologists), senates, convocations, and corporations. And who shall say that the most private and small domestic household is free from these malign and petty passions, which embitter alike every day's work and every day's pleasure? Any one who has ruled over the small number of two persons must have experienced how difficult it is to prevent these two from being jealous of each other; and must have found how much the jealousy of his subordinates may hinder their work and his.

Then take the employments of mankind; what weary, inane, monotonous things they are! I might descend into the lowest ranks of employment, and show how many thousands of our fellow-creatures are occupied in factories from morning till night, joining threads that have snapped, or performing some one operation in metal, not very engaging or varied, such as making pins' heads. I might also descant upon the many loathsome employments which must exist upon the earth. But I abhor extremes, and my argument will be stronger if I keep to the more favoured occupations in which men employ themselves.

Let us begin with the learned professions. Year after year the lawyer proceeds in his wearisome round of nice

cavilling, dexterous sophistry-weaving, or dull verbiage-spinning. The greater part of his knowledge has no basis in nature, and would be swept away at once if men were wiser and more reasonable than they are. The divine has a wider and deeper career; but it is always comprehended within narrow limits; and it is very dangerous for him to think out anything of his own. The man of medicine, whose doings, I must admit, have, or ought to have, some basis in nature, is also for the most part a slave to routine; and the sneer of Voltaire is not without some truth even in this age, that the physician is one "who pours drugs of which he knows little into a body of which he knows less."

Then take the soldier and the sailor. Their professions seem to the young and the thoughtless very glorious, but to the rest of the world they appear a hideous necessity. And anything more dull, formal, and uninteresting than the greater part of their career cannot well be imagined. At least, so they are pleased to tell us themselves, and I see no reason whatever for doubting their word.

The trader, the artisan, the labourer, the clerk, has each a very narrow sphere to act in. For the most part they soon learn to do the best they can in their respective occupations; and ever afterwards it is mere mill-work for them.

I had forgotten to name the artist and the man of letters. They seem to have a very wide field, but it does not turn out to be so wide as we should have expected.

Soon they find out their speciality, and ever afterwards they go droning on at the same thing, which they can do a little better than some one else ; and so they repeat themselves indefinitely, until their generous patron, the world, becomes tired of their doings and of them.

Over all this various kind of work there come weariness, numbness, and a sense of its inanity : the wheels of life drag heavily : and the man, as he lies down to rest, thinks with a sigh that he has done nothing to-day better, or more to the purpose, than he did yesterday, and that to-morrow's occupations will be even as to-day's. There is quite as much vanity and folly in men's most serious work as in their lightest play and most trivial pleasures. And as for these pleasures, they may be disposed of in a single sentence, by saying, as we can with truth, that even in the most civilised nations, men contrive to make their pleasures as dull, longsome, and laborious as any part of their daily task-work.

Consider again the conditions under which men act and live—the conditions, I mean, of their minds, their bodies, and of the external circumstances which surround them. Shakspeare tells us,

“The learned pate  
Ducks to the golden fool : all is oblique :”

But this is not the worst of the matter. It is that the condition of men is such that any choice amongst them is for the most part hap-hazard, and is necessarily so. People complain that the round men are put into the square holes, and the square men into the round holes ;



but they forget that it would take the whole knowledge and attention of mankind to place men rightly ; and in fine, we must recognise the fact that there is not time enough in life to make men's positions suitable for them.

Then look at another condition of human life ; namely, that all objects which are desirable when seen from a distance, lose at least half their desirability when they are seen near, and especially when they are appropriated.

It cannot have escaped the notice of any one who has had much experience, that human life is a system of cunningly devised checks and counter-checks. This is easily seen in considering physical things, such, for instance, as the human body. One of these bodies has a particular disorder. You could cure it by a certain remedy, if that remedy could be continued far enough. But it cannot, as it would produce another disorder. The same law holds good throughout life ; and sometimes, where there is an appearance of the power of free movement in many directions, there is in reality a check to movement in every one.

It is a consequence of the law just indicated that narrow limits are assigned to all human conquests ; and great success in any direction is mostly gained by fostering a great disease. The Spanish proverb, which Mr. Milverton quoted some time ago, applies well here, " So much as there is of the more, so much there is of the less." The limits within which a man, or a system, or an enterprise, can grow harmoniously and securely, are exceedingly confined.

A child does not see this limitation, and stretches out its hand to grasp the moon, unconscious that nature has put any limits to its power of grasping. A boy would conquer the whole world, and desires to have everything, and to be everybody ; but he soon finds out that nature is not so easily mastered : and besides there are other boys, who also wish to possess and dominate the whole universe. The man thinks he is much wiser, but goes on after the same fashion, hoping too much, desiring too much, and planning too largely. All the while, however, as he cannot help gaining something from the hard blows of experience, though he persevere in hoping and desiring and planning, he becomes as timid and apprehensive as a lizard. He has lost the confidence of boyhood, and has not gained wisdom. The immense plans and projects of humanity must be the most amusing thing for a superior being to contemplate ; for I suppose it is true that no man has even laid out his plans with sufficient humility for them to afford a reasonable hope of being carried into execution by him.

I might have left it entirely to a friend of ours, now present, to point out and dwell upon the various minor vexations and miseries of human life, which he has largely treated in his essay on "Worry," and the grand total of which made so formidable an appearance when enumerated by a skilful master of the subject. But in so vast a sphere of vexation there are points which escaped even his notice ; one of which I cannot resist touching upon. It is this,—that, according to the usual

current of human life, the demands upon a man's means often increase at a time when he is least able to bear these demands, to improve those means, or to shift with skill his burden in any way : when he has no longer spare health, energy, or time at his command : and when a certain rigidity is impressing itself on his mind and his fortunes. Hence, to a generous man there often comes in middle life the necessity for an unaccustomed and most unwelcome parsimony.

Such a man finds that his habits of giving are to be restrained and his charities circumscribed : that the greatest care is to be given to small things : and that buying and selling are no longer to be treated as matters of indifference. Gradually a sense of sordidness seems to creep over the whole of his life. But the course he has undertaken must be persevered in for the sake of others, however much it may bring him under the comments of the world : that is, of his neighbours, who are the world to him ; however much it may derange his habits ; and however much it may militate against his natural character. Trials of this kind seem to increase as civilisation increases, and are especially rife in thickly-peopled and well-ordered communities.

I am very fond of dwelling upon the concrete—not talking always of virtues, vices, and miseries in the abstract ; not seeking for illustrations only from large classes of mankind, but choosing individual cases, which have something typical in their character. Think of the terrible positions that there are in life amongst these indi-

viduals—of the leader, for instance, who knows or fears that all is lost, and who yet must maintain, not a gay presence, but what is far more difficult, an equable and cheerful bearing ; and this too perhaps for days, weeks, and months. The general rides down the lines before battle, sitting erectly, looking cheerfully, uttering on all sides words of high encouragement. All the while he knows that he is outnumbered, outmanœuvred, and that the faint cloud of dust in the dim distance, if it indicate the approach of a new body of troops, cannot be succour for him, but may be reinforcements for the enemy. In his tent, he may for a minute or two bow down his head over the wooden table covered with maps and despatches, and, enjoying for that brief space the luxury of being honestly wretched, utter a deep sigh, and wish to himself that it were all over, and that he were in his grave, where he might never hear the hasty obloquy that will be poured out upon him for this unfortunate campaign. But now there is the sound of an aide-de-camp's foot approaching, and the general starts up again bright and confident in appearance, and ready to issue clear and decisive commands. There is some grandeur in this position ; but in others closely resembling it there are sordidness and sinfulness, and every kind of abject misery ; which yet must be glossed over or hidden by apparent cheerfulness and constant readiness of resource. The trader trembling on bankruptcy, the head or the moving personage in some great commercial concern tottering to its fall, what a part he has to perform ! Cheering the

dubious, encouraging the timid, overcoming the scrupulous, scattering everywhere hopes and expectations which he knows full well are for the most part fallacious or mendacious—what an agony of acting is his! The bubble bursts, and on every side arise fierce objurgations and just threats of condign punishment. Joining fully in much of this condemnation, I never can avoid thinking of, and taking into some account the supreme wretchedness which the chief actors must often have endured in this sordid battle.

But take a case in which there is nothing to blame. Instead of being at the bottom of this amphitheatre (which, by the way, is not without gloomy suggestions of its own), imagine that we were perched upon some great height, as we were at Salzburg the other day. Hundreds of persons in the specks of habitations we survey must be cheering and encouraging others, and maintaining hopeful countenances, whilst hope is almost dead in themselves. The head of the family, or the consoling person on whom all rely, sits by the bed of sickness, and does not dare to show by the slightest sign the agony of fear that is within him. Men or women in such positions can even stifle, or breathe softly, the sighs which the oppressed heart must utter, but which none else must hear; and during weary days, and still more weary nights, maintain hope, encouragement, and activity in a household that would absolutely droop and collapse without their presence.

Then, turning to quite a new point of view, take the

position of a hypocrite, oftentimes an enforced position. He would give the world, perhaps, to be known as he is, and to be freed from the horrible burden of undue reputation. But think of the inconsistency of men's characters, and how they really are good and sincere and upright in one direction, and vicious, tortuous, and unjust in another direction. "That which I would not, that I do." Think what a battle such a man has with himself, and in a world which demands consistency, and insists upon completeness of character—in others ; and, if it discover any streaks of black, is apt to believe that there is and never has been any white.

Then take the position, not abject, nor sinful, but very heartbreaking, of the man of wide insight, foresight, and knowledge, who knows what should be done in great matters, but is almost powerless to control them, and passes his life in remonstrances and endeavours to enlighten others, being all the time obliged perhaps to carry into execution small and incomplete measures which he knows will be ineffective. Such a man is but too apt to become soured and censorious, and at last perhaps to give up the aims of his life in sheer despair.

I have not touched upon the wretched positions of those persons who have to teach what they do not thoroughly believe ; or of those persons who are so combined with others that they cannot separate from them, and yet are perpetually grieved at the courses they are compelled by their partners to adopt ; or the positions of those persons who go through life surrounded by an

atmosphere of uncongeniality. Considering all these things, how true we find that proverb to be, "that there is a skeleton in every house:" and as far as I have observed, it is generally a skeleton which requires to be fed and clothed—a skeleton not merely unproductive, but consuming.

Finally, I will carry the war into the heart of the enemy's country, and will ask what are the consolations of men,—of all at least but pious men? For in these consolations may be discerned the depth of their misery. A wise man in abject want was eating some garden stuff which he had picked up; and he said to himself, "Surely there is no one in the world more poor and wretched than I am;" and he turned round and beheld another wise man eating the leaves which he had thrown away.<sup>1</sup> Such are the consolations of mankind. They are told, when they are miserable, that some one is still

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<sup>1</sup> This is taken from Calderon, a writer for whom it is evident that Mr. Midhurst has a peculiar affection. Milverton afterwards pointed out the passage to me, which I subjoin.

"Cuentan de un sabio, que un dia  
 Tan pobre y misero estaba,  
 Que solo se sustentaba  
 De unas yerbas que cogia.  
 Habrá otro (entre si decia)  
 Mas pobre y triste que yo?  
 Y cuando el rostro volvió  
 Halló la respuesta, viendo  
 Que iba otro sabio cogiendo  
 Las hojas que el arrojó."

*La Vida es Sueño*, Jorn 1.

more miserable, or they are informed by their friends, Job's comforters, that all their misery has been brought upon themselves by their own doings ; which is like thrusting thorns into sores by way of healing : or that it does not matter much what happens in a world which is so confused, where life is brief, where nothing is certain for a day or even for an hour, and where no lot is to be envied because of the secret griefs and terrors which beset even the most felicitous of men.

These and the like are your consolations, and upon them alone I might have rested to prove my assertions touching the deep, extensive, varied, and consuming misery of mankind.

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When Mr. Midhurst had finished reading, Ellesmere drew a long breath, as if he were much relieved by the essay having come to an end ; and, looking round at Milverton, signed to him to begin his reply. But Milverton was silent. Ellesmere then looked significantly at me ; but I did not feel competent to undertake, at a moment's notice, such a task as setting up the felicity of mankind against all the weight of dolour with which Mr. Midhurst had dragged it down. I, therefore, made no response to Ellesmere's signs of encouragement. The girls looked quite down-hearted. Walter alone maintained his equanimity, whistling and rattling marbles in his pocket. At last Milverton spoke.



*Milverton.* I could say something at once in answer to Mr. Midhurst ; but I think it would be better to wait a little, and would be more respectful to an essay of such gravity not to attempt an immediate answer to it. Let me have the manuscript. I will take a walk with it, and if it does not crush me and I come back alive, I shall have something to say against it, perhaps, in the evening. I certainly should wish to have something to say against it, for I do not at all agree with it.

We willingly assented to this proposal, and agreed to have our conversation in the evening in our own room. As we walked away, Ellesmere said to me :—"An excellent move that of Milverton's. We should have been crushed by Rasselas-Falstaff, if we had attempted an answer then. Besides, we will have the room very cheerful—the red curtains drawn, a blazing wood fire (it is chilly to-day), and plenty of light. These little things tell. I really hope that Milverton may be able to say something worth hearing in reply ; for, upon my word, such views as Midhurst's depress one ; and he is evidently sincere, and really does hold them. It was not like a schoolboy's theme.

"By the way, the only cheering thing during the reading of the essay was to see that boy Walter's utter indifference to all the miseries that were to come upon him when he has grown up—

" 'Alas ! regardless of their doom,  
The little victims play.'

Walter's chief thought was when it would all end ; and his amusement was to tickle his father and me with a long

straw, which he cunningly withdrew, looking perfectly unconscious whenever we turned round. His father never found him out. I could not help thinking that the boy's proceedings were a droll commentary upon the essay. It is just what half the world are about, amusing themselves and annoying others with straws, not knowing or not caring for all the fulminations that dolorous men like Midhurst are pouring forth against the miserable circumstances of life. That boy is a very important addition to our party. He is a representative character. He represents a large portion of the outer world. You do not like boys: you have not the requisite animal spirits to bear with them. I declare I am quite concerned to think how dull Walter will be all the evening while we are discussing the essay. However, he will read about birds' eggs—there again, just like half the world, amused with something not far removed from bird's-nesting, regardless of the solemn growl of philosophic thunder. It is very fortunate that it is so."

## CHAPTER XI.

### LIFE NOT SO MISERABLE, AFTER ALL.

THE room was made to look very cheerful. It was quite droll to see Ellesmere bustling about, and taking pains to arrange everything to the best advantage, like the lady of a house giving the finishing touches of adornment just before company is coming. He brought a glass of wine to Milverton, who was in a corner poring over the manuscript of the essay, and who looked up rather amazed at this unusual attention from Ellesmere. Then we sent to Mr. Midhurst to tell him we were ready. As he entered the room, Ellesmere whispered to me, "Hang the fellow; there is a solemn radiancy about him. He thinks he has crushed us: and that is the delight of these gloomy people. That is their happiness. I have a great mind to tell him so." When Mr. Midhurst had sat down, Milverton asked us if we were all ready and inclined to listen, and receiving our assent, began at once in the following manner.

*Milverton.* Well, we have heard this essay. Of its eloquence it would be presumptuous in me to speak, or of its experience of life, otherwise than with great respect. But all along I have been thinking of the well-known and profound remark of Goethe:—"How can a man jump off

from his own shadow?" Mr. Midhurst has given us an extraordinary picture composed of shadows only. Now I ask, where are the objects which throw these shadows? and I am instantly reminded of the joyous objects on which full light plays, of honest ambition, of noble toil, or even of ignoble toil, of affection, of kith and kin, and even of the visible and physical pleasures of animal life, of the higher delights of those pleasures in which sensuousness is combined with intellectual perception, of the delights of the eye, the joys of the ear, and rising higher, of the pleasures in the exercise of the pure intellect, which, say what you like, are known in some measure to the rudest of mankind.

*Ellesmere* (aside). Well done: we have one utterer of flowing pompous sentences set against another. I begin to breathe again.

*Milverton*. Mr. Midhurst has darkened, not to say exaggerated, every sorrow of which human life is capable, and at the same time he has made out man to be the poorest creature that can be imagined, the victim of every chance, and of every trivial circumstance. In this poverty of being is there no security? What does Sir Thomas Browne say:—"To weep into stones are fables, and sorrows destroy us or themselves." When there comes a greater soul than ordinary, more liable to be buffeted by long-continued sorrow, there is the strength to bear it. What does *Medea* say, when it is asked her, "Husband, countrymen, wealth, all gone from you, what remains?" Her answer is, "*Medea* remains." "*Medea superest*:"<sup>1</sup>—and Marie Antoinette

<sup>1</sup> "*Nutr.* Spes nulla monstrat rebus afflictis viam.

*Med.* Qui nil potest sperare, desperet nihil.

*Nutr.* Abiere Colchi; conjugis nulla est fides;  
Nihilque superest opibus e tantis tibi.

*Med.* *Medea superest*; hic mare et terras vides,  
Ferrumque et ignes et deos et fulmina."

SENECA: *Medea*, Act. ii. v. 162-167.

writes :—" I count upon my own courage rather than upon the course of events." " If I tremble, it is from cold," exclaims the great mathematician Bailly, when led to the scaffold. " We advanced," says General Foy, " to Waterloo as the Greeks did to Thermopylæ ; all of us without fear, most of us without hope."

*Mr. Midhurst.* Well, I cannot see much in what you urge. The fact of suffering is not removed because the sufferer has a fine saying to say about it.

*Ellesmere.* I differ from you. I think the suffering may be diminished by a fine saying that one's self has said. The fine saying would not comfort me, but I dare say it would comfort these heroic souls : and Milverton's point was, that those great souls who have large capacity for sorrow have also unusual gifts of heroic endurance.

*Mr. Midhurst.* So you, too, are ranged against me. I shall have a hard battle to fight.

*Milverton.* Before a thorough answer can be given to some parts of Mr. Midhurst's essay we must look a little into the nature of being. The present is inappreciable from its fleeting nature. We live chiefly, it will be admitted, in the future or the past. Now all past sorrow has a tendency to transform itself into something else. All sorrows, follies, and errors have their edges wonderfully softened off by retrospection : they become possessions rather than detriments. We see this strikingly in the loss of a child. We pity the bereaved parents greatly ; and if suffering deserves pity, they deserve it. But those are more to be pitied who never had a child. I do not believe that anything is lost in the spiritual world any more than in the material ; and it would not surprise me to discover in some future state that we have each had the exact amount of misery and trouble in this state that was requisite for our natures. If there ever was a man in the world for whom the world in the fulness of its gratitude would have wished all honour, happiness, and

credit, whose old age delighted nations would have been glad to soothe, whom those near him doted upon, and those far off, who knew anything about him, could not but admire—that man was Sir Walter Scott.

*Dunsford.* Quite true. I never can read that last volume of Lockhart's life of him (and I have read it many times) without finding the tears unpleasantly near my eyes.

*Milverton.* Well, I was going to say that, loving and honouring him as much as it is possible to love and honour any man whom one has not closely known, I yet would not wish him to have been without the sore troubles so beautifully commemorated in the last sad volume relating his well-spent life. I feel that those sorrows were a possession to him and to the whole world. The steady, quiet, and humble magnanimity with which he bore those troubles—troubles that must have been particularly irksome and grievous to a man who was not deficient in pride, have endeared him more to me, and I have no doubt to the rest of the world, than his writing all those admirable novels; which, from their harmonious, discreet, loving, chivalrous character, have tended to raise the tone of thought in Europe, and are the best product to my mind that modern fiction has to show for itself.

*Ellesmere.* I declare what you say, Milverton, is very true. Sir Walter Scott to me is one of the first of men. I do not wonder that animals loved him. Sagacious creatures! How well they understand us men! Lavater was not so wise as a dog is (say Fixer) in his judgment of men's characters. Shall I tell you what I think one of the most beautiful things Sir Walter ever did? It is something which you would never guess that I should particularly admire.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Was it the interest he took in the dinner-parties given by his children?

*Ellesmere.* No: that is a very Midhurstian reminiscence of Sir Walter. It was his writing a volume of sermons.

He could not give money to a poor young clergyman. He was in the midst of his own sufferings from grievous impecuniosity; but he added to his daily great labour by writing something which should bring a hundred pounds for this young man whose case he pitied.

Now that is one of those things which are tests of a man. It is like Doctor Johnson (dear old Samuel, heaven reward thee for it!) carrying to his chambers the wretched woman on his back, oblivious or regardless of the passers-by, and comforting and cherishing her till she was able to return home.

But we wander from the subject, and must return to our pounding of this dolorous essay; for I am sure that Milverton has not half exhausted his store of consolations.

By the way I cannot help observing how artful Milverton is; as crafty as seven Old Bailey practitioners. He contrives to introduce a subject upon which we are all sure to agree with him, even Mr. Midhurst; and we forget what he said before. Then, having warmed us up, as it were, and having got a glow of sympathy from us, he proceeds with his address to the jury in a seemingly triumphant manner. But official men are more crafty than lawyers, as I have often remarked.

*Milverton.* Well now, there is another point I wish to urge. I meant to have brought it forward when we were commenting on Ellesmere's memorable essay. You talk of success in life; that is, you, Ellesmere, do, for Mr. Midhurst always talks of failure. But I suspect you both fix your standard much too high. I think a man rather successful than otherwise who gets through life without becoming seriously amenable to the laws of his country.

*Ellesmere.* Who is not hanged.

*Milverton.* Both of you will insist upon fancying some neat, well-devised, complete career, in which there is steady advance, and no ups and downs; whereas I look upon what

you both call ill-success as one of the most needful parts of the career. I am convinced that it must be needful from its universality. I feel confident that suffering is not waste : and, if you observe, exactly the same kind of suffering that affects the highest careers, affects the lowest. Some foreigner asked the great chemist Wollaston to show him his laboratory. He rang the bell, and his servant brought in a common round tray, on which were a few glasses and a retort or two. "That," said Wollaston, "is my laboratory !" Probably each individual of the human race has to try for himself some considerable experiment ; and some try it on a grand scale, and there is a noise of armies, fleets, and battles, a shaking together of royal crowns and dynasties, —and a name is formed

"To point a moral, or adorn a tale."

But exactly the same experiment is tried in village life, amidst the lowing of kine, and other harmless rustic noises. That suffering is one of these experiments to be tried by all men I hold for certain. There is a beautiful passage in a modern tragedy, called *Athelwold*, which comes into my mind just now as bearing closely on the subject.

"In the young Pagan world  
Men deified the beautiful, the glad,  
The strong, the boastful, and it came to nought ;  
We have raised Pain and Sorrow into Heaven,  
And in our temples, on our altars, Grief  
Stands symbol of our faith, and it shall last  
As long as man is mortal and unhappy.  
The gay at heart *may* wander to the skies,  
And harps be found them, and the branch of palm  
Be put into their hands ;—our earthly church  
Knows not of such ;—no votarist of our faith  
Till he has dropped his tears into the stream  
Tastes of its sweetness.



*Athelwold.*

Wherefore this to me?

*Dunstan.* Because to spirits wounded but not weak

The church is more than refuge, it transmutes

Calamity to greatness."

*Ellesmere.* I begin to see that it is desirable that every man should have a lawsuit once in his life.

*Milverton.* Yes, I admit that the measure of human suffering is incomplete without some experience of law. Still these are the privileges of the rich. I did not say that all men were equal, but that most men had sufficient opportunities of suffering—the smallest persons as well as the greatest personages.

But, to resume the argument. You will admit that humility, tolerance, and forbearance are about the three best things that can be inserted into any man's character. Now I ask: how on earth are most men to acquire these good qualities in sufficient amount except through suffering and error, misfortune and sin? Of course you can answer me by saying, they might have been created humble, tolerant, and forbearing. I have no reply, putting aside revealed religion for the moment, but to say that you ignore and abjure all growth. Here is the landscape which surrounds us. You would have it always to have been the same: the great trees never to have been small trees, and everything to remain fixed and permanent. I can only say, that these are not apparently the conditions of the universe.

Well, then, you would demand another thing—that all created beings should be equal. I daresay you will deny this, but your arguments, if pushed to their legitimate conclusion, will lead to it.

*Ellesmere.* When you say "you," and "your," I hope you do not mean the plural you and your (what a stupid thing it is, by the way, that there should be such confusion possible in our language!) for, without entering into these profundities, I am ready to admit that I am on your side

of the argument, and if I said anything in my essay "On the Arts of Self-Advancement," which calls for correction, I accept the correction. We do talk a great deal of nonsense about success, and what we call failure may often be the means of leading to success in the formation of character.

I must say for myself, however, that in my essay I was not particularly considering the character of the successful man, except in so far as it might promote his success. I believe I kept to my subject. I did not travel out of my brief.

*Milverton.* That part of Mr. Midhurst's essay, which I presume to think especially fallacious, is where he comments upon men's employments. It is easy to sneer at these employments, or even to show that they contain a great deal of folly and weariness. But to maintain that they are not the cause of high pleasures, great excitements, and of abiding satisfaction, is really going contrary to the whole experience of mankind. When Mr. Midhurst was worrying the affections, I felt that it was difficult to get the prey out of his mouth. The affections aim at so much that there must often be signal failure, which a man, who takes the gloomy side, will be sure to make the most of. But all work is full of consolation. One thing that Mr. Midhurst overlooks is the immense skilfulness which is gradually attained (and note what happiness there is latent in that word gradually) even in the poorest and smallest of human employments. I dare say you have never observed the skill that there is in such a common thing as bricklaying. It takes a life to lay bricks well; and one bricklayer differs from another as much as one great artist from another. Notice the satisfaction, or the critical displeasure, which a common artist manifests when he steps back from his work and surveys it. Do you mean to tell me, too, that a lawyer, a divine, or a physician, has not often the keenest pleasure in his work? Has a lawyer no delight in what he calls "a nice point?" a

physician, or surgeon, no satisfaction in what he calls "a difficult case?" a divine no joy in successful persuasion or exhortation? And these pleasures are recurring pleasures, daily pleasures, which are not counted as pleasures, and are all the more so for that.

Well, then, as to various clerkly and routine work, is there not much difference even in this work? No man attains the habit of accuracy without a great deal of discipline. And, besides, is there not an exceeding satisfaction in being trusted, and believed in, and looked up to as an authority? The human being who was most absorbed in his work, of all whom I ever knew, was one whose business it was to register and put away papers in a public office. This seems dull work enough, but no shepherd ever took more care of his flock, distinguishing them by the slightest mark of difference, than this good man did of the official papers endlessly pouring in upon him day after day: and he was never cross, whatever you asked him to produce. I think he liked a difficulty, such as being asked about a paper of the year 1797. Mr. Midhurst would have pitied this clerk, and would have uttered grand and disdainful sentences to show the poor nature of the work; but never would there have been less occasion for pity or disdain.

Again, it is very well to depreciate men's specialities, and to make out that they are acquired in very little time; but they are mostly the result of great labour, are in themselves a considerable triumph, are particularly pleasurable as being characteristic, and on each occasion of their being exercised afford new delight. An artist has cultivated with care a natural gift for taking likenesses well. Do you mean to say that he ever exhausts that faculty, that its exercise becomes monotonous? Each new sitter is a new world of observation to him.

I observe, Mr. Midhurst, that you said nothing about the pursuits of scientific men. You must own that the

basis of their work is nature : and, if you have had any dealings with them, you must admit that they find endless joy in their occupations.

By the way, I must here make an especial protest against Mr. Midhurst's attack upon medical men. I must say out my say about them, if I only do so once in my life. They are, according to my experience, the most humane, tender, and considerate men we have. Everywhere they go about consoling, healing, amending. I have never met in any class such tenderness for the poor, and such active benevolence towards them, as amongst medical men. This is not a peculiarity of this age. When you study the memoirs of past times, you always find that there were eminent medical men in whom all their patients greatly confided, and who were foremost in the good works of their day. The names of Mead, Heberden, Arbuthnot, Jenner, Hunter, will at once occur to you. Then, as to the extent of their pursuits ; there are no men who are less limited in that respect. They go on observing, seeking, and imbibing information from all quarters to the end of their lives. I will give you a curious instance, which I believe to be not a singular one, of their width of pursuit.

I went to consult one of the most eminent physicians of the day. Among other things that he advised me was to give my mind very much to country pursuits.

Taking up the *Gardener's Chronicle*, he said, "I study this every week ; it is a great pleasure to me." "Well, but you have no garden," I replied. "No," he said, "but I like to know what is going on in gardening, and I read this regularly."

It is not only in studies connected with nature that medical men are unremitting. They take the greatest interest in human affairs generally ; and no kind of knowledge seems to come amiss to them. They have, therefore, all the happiness which is to be found from having a

very wide circuit of interest in the affairs of the world, both physical and moral.

*Ellesmere.* Medical men are certainly most intelligent persons. They dislike us lawyers, I suspect, because we often succeed in bothering them thoroughly when we get them into a witness box ; but I do not return their dislike.

*Milverton.* Well, then, as to artists. Must it not be allowed that you find amongst sculptors and painters most agreeable persons of highly-cultivated minds—often with but a limited amount of information, which is a necessary consequence of such an absorbing pursuit as theirs, but who make what they do know go very far? A friend of mine, who has seen a great deal of the world, says that it is so pleasant a thing to sit to R——, an eminent painter of our day, that it would be worth while, he says, to be a celebrated man, in order to have an excuse for many pictures of one being painted, so that one might have the pleasure of spending many hours in company with the before-named artist. However, it is not about their being agreeable that we have to talk, but about their pursuit being a happy one. *Ellesmere*, who is a great admirer of *Hazlitt's* writings, will remember what he says of the pleasures of painting—how it has the charm of a manual as well as of an intellectual pursuit.—Besides, artists often rise to eminence when, comparatively speaking, young men ; and to their pleasant studios throng the eminent men of the previous generation, with whom they have the most familiar conversation, and thus enjoy one of the chief advantages of greatness without the trouble of it.

I could go through the whole list of men's employments, and I should not fear to take issue with you upon any one of them—the humblest, the most noxious, or the most apparently deplorable. What could I not have said for the occupation of the agricultural labourer, or even for the factory hand in a mill, who, amidst the general clang and

bustle, finds a great deal to amuse him, and much more skill to exercise than you would at first imagine?

No ; you may pull down friendship, you may ridicule love, you may make out relationship to be a grievous and a dolorous tie ; but you will never persuade the working men of the world that they do not contrive to obtain a large amount of joy and consolation out of their work, whatever it may be.

*Dunsford.* I quite agree with you.

*Blanche.* I am sure my cousin is right.

*Ellesmere.* Miss Blanche's opinion upon the point in question is most valuable ; because, if crochet-work can fill the mind, and make it happy, there may be some chance for law. Milverton has just told us that one bricklayer is a much better workman than another : is there any difference in feminine work ? One flimsiness seems to be much the same as another.

*Mildred.* I doubt whether Sir John Ellesmere's opinions upon law matters differ more from the youngest barrister's than——

*Ellesmere.* One design in needlework does from another. But then, these designs are doubtless made by men.

But, without going farther into the matter, I have no doubt that Milverton is right. Work is the greatest comfort left to us.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Well, I certainly have had to address an audience not much prejudiced in favour of what I could say. You all seem to be devoted optimists—at least for this particular occasion, by special desire.

*Ellesmere.* It all depends upon dinner. I took care to feed them well, and people in good condition are not easily to be brought down to the low level of pessimism. Proceed, Milverton ; and prove everything in life to be pleasant, even a moist picnic with quarrelsome companions, and the bread and salt forgotten.

*Milverton.* Mr. Midhurst was very great in the ridicule

which he cast upon the plans and projects of mankind, or rather I should say, of individual men. But though the individual may perish, mankind does not : and amidst the innumerable projects which the individual devises, though some are dropped, some are carried on by other men to a successful termination.

The truth is, Mr. Midhurst, who has been much in the East, seems to have imbibed some of the Bhuddist notions, and would have us all seek after Nirvana, as the one chief good.

*Ellesmere.* What on earth is "Nirvana"?

*Milverton.* It would take a long time to explain to you thoroughly the full meaning of the word ; but I may briefly say, that it is a state of being which the perfected man arrives at from perceiving that all doing, having, and being is a delusion. It is one of the most remarkable things I know, that this should be the principal doctrine of the religion which numbers most votaries in the world. For, as I daresay you are aware, the Bhuddists outnumber not only the believers of any other creed, but those of all creeds put together. I daresay the common people do not know much about "Nirvana," but nevertheless it is the sum and substance of Bhuddism. And a dreary creed it certainly presents.

*Dunsford.* Purely shocking ! it tries to affix a stigma upon creation.

*Ellesmere.* It does seem marvellously absurd ; but I cannot believe that it is the creed of the common people. I wish we had a Bhuddist here. I always like to hear what people who are accused can say for themselves. Let us vote that Mr. Midhurst is a Bhuddist, and cross-examine him.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Milverton endeavours to fix their dogmas upon me as mine. I shall not take up the character he would assign to me. I agree, however, with Sir John, that I should like to hear what they would say for themselves.

*Ellesmere.* Have you anything more to say, Milverton, proving that this pessimist is all wrong, and should be made happy (the greatest punishment to him) at all hazards and all costs ?

*Milverton.* I am set up as an advocate to oppose Mr. Midhurst on this occasion, but I am sure I can conscientiously say that I have not opposed him hitherto in any way contrary to my own belief. If, however, I were to contend against what he said about jealousy, though even that he carried to an excessive height, I should be insincere. It is most vexatious to see the business of the world and its pleasures so much hindered as they are by petty envies and jealousies, mostly springing out of a disordered vanity.

Mr. Midhurst spoke of Hume's notion about something being added to human nature which would greatly improve it. If these small jealousies could be subtracted from human nature, it seems as if the world would at once advance two thousand years. I have always thought that something might be done by education to subdue and restrain these mean passions, whereas, on the contrary, by the excessive stimulus we often give to emulation, we run some risk of increasing them. I really do think that if people could not, according to Mr. Midhurst's expression, be made to see the beauty of being second or third in any contest, at least they might be made to see the beauty of being contented with being second or third. At any rate we must admit that Mr. Midhurst has put his finger upon a considerable blot ; and all I can venture to say in reply, is that the evil might perhaps be much modified by an improvement in education.

*Ellesmere.* This is skilful, Milverton : you should always agree with your adversary on some small point. It gives a great appearance of candour : we often do it in Parliament. Proceed.

*Milverton.* It is a curious thing, that Mr. Midhurst avoided any allusion to relationship.



*Mr. Midhurst.* So I did ; but it was not from feeling that it was a weak point. Has it not been said that a man's worst enemies are those of his own household ? And I need hardly remind Milverton, so versed as he is in Spanish proverbs, of a Spanish proverb that says :—"To him who has sons, or sheep, vexations will never be wanting."<sup>1</sup> A friend of mine who has brought up a large family, every one of whom has been successful, is yet wont to say :—"Sir, they are one corroding care, from the moment of their birth to the moment of your death." What says Jeremy Taylor on this point ? "He is born in vanity and sin ; he comes into the world like morning mushrooms, soon thrusting up their heads into the air, and conversing with their kindred of the same production, and as soon as they, turn into dust and forgetfulness : some of them without any other interest in the affairs of the world, but that they made their parents a little glad, and very sorrowful."

*Milverton.* These are very dolorous sayings, and there is a good deal of truth in them, no doubt. But weigh the matter fairly, and the balance inclines the other way. Relationship is not made what it should be, but it is an immense blessing. You cannot, by a few gloomy sayings, dispose of the long course of pleasure, hope, sympathy, and joy that there is in such relationship as that of a father to a daughter, a mother to a son, a sister to a brother, an uncle to a niece. Fathers and sons often make but a poor business of their relationship, but when it is successful, it is perhaps the most successful. There is nothing more to be said upon these subjects but the common things which have often been said, such as, that we live again in our children. Why, the cats and dogs, if they could speak, would confute you, Mr. Midhurst.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Well, they have not got so much to think

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<sup>1</sup> "Quien tiene hijos o ovejas no le faltan quejas."

of as men and women, about the advancement of their families.

*Ellesmere.* A mother-in-law, now, is a nice relation.

*Milverton.* That is a most unjust sneer, Ellesmere. I have always thought that mothers-in-law have been very unfairly treated. They are a stock subject for remarks in comedy or farce, of an ill-natured kind ; but in reality I believe that the better kind of people often live very happily with their mothers-in-law.

Well, then, you talk of cares. What an uncomfortable human being a man would be who was without cares, or who had not a sufficient number of them. He would be like a creature who had got into a planet of which the mass was too small for his muscular power, so that he would hop about, instead of being justly kept down, by a sufficient amount of gravity, to his proper planet. I have said before that sorrows are possessions. So also, in their way, are cares. You may laugh at this, but there is more in it perhaps than you may think at first.

*Ellesmere.* There is no getting over this man. He is as wildly bent upon making out everything to be comfortable as the other upon making out everything to be nauseous and wretched. Seriously, though, I believe Milverton is the less wrong of the two. Cares drive away *ennui*. Some man, either in fiction, or in real life, has said somewhat humorously, that he found a comfort even in his debts, for he had always something to think of ; and practically, you do not find that the men who appear to be fortunately placed — debtless, care-without, well-to-do men, with one child, or none—are so much happier than the rest of mankind.

You have made the best defence that you could for cares ; but, to be candid, I do not think, Milverton, that you have been great about relationship. Mr. Midhurst seems to be rather triumphant over you there.

*Milverton.* Well, I will say something more then ; and see if I cannot make a better fight.

I know that there is a great deal which is eminently difficult in relationship. Take the case of parents. Their lives seem to be spent sometimes in restraining and forbidding. I go out and see Walter on the water, in a little boat with crowded sail, and I have to call him in, and forbid the sailing. I next find him injuring my new gates which had just been painted. I have to forbid that. Shortly afterwards I catch him throwing stones at somebody or something which does not require to have stones thrown at it. Then he is wet through, and I am peremptory in insisting upon a change of clothes. All day long sometimes, in the management of children, it is "don't, don't, don't." One wonders that they can like one at all ; but they do, and if they do not now, they will. I am but just beginning to love my father (who has been dead many years) as I ought. How well I remember on some occasion, when he wanted to take care of me just as I do of Walter about the change of wet clothes, I was insolent,—not in word but in thought. "Could not I take care of myself?—Was I always to be interfered with?" etc. etc. But now I appreciate all his tenderness. I could go and do penance for those thoughts, as Dr. Johnson did, bare-headed, in the market-place of Uttoxeter, for his one act of disobedience to his father. Excellent Dr. Johnson ! How he always comes up in any serious talk amongst Englishmen, and what a loving reverence we have for him, notwithstanding his combativeness in conversation ; of which Dunsford, I know, disapproves, and I think rightly.

To go back to relationship. There is great comfort in the thought that, though there may be little troubles and disagreements, yet the tendency of the thing is to come right in the end. Walter pouts, and looks like an injured Walter, when I have saved him from a fever by this

peremptory order to change his clothes. But the day will come when he will sigh and say, "I wish I had anybody now who cared whether I was wet or dry, and who should prevent me from throwing brickbats injudiciously." The same after-growth of affection pervades relationship. It is full of troubles, duties, responsibilities, over-familiarities; but in the long run it comes right; and every day, as they grow older, people become more attached to those relations left to them, and discern that, after all, the burden of relationship may be heavier, but is far more tolerable than that of loneliness.

*Ellesmere.* Come now: this is reasonably put; and I do think Milverton has made the best of his case.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Sir John has become a thorough partisan. I must wait till some other day, when he will all of a sudden be found on my side of the question.

*Milverton.* I am now going to give you a very odd piece of comfort, which, if I could work it out, would answer a good deal of what Mr. Midhurst has urged. Henry Taylor has said, that most men see in their lives the story of their lives. He meant it satirically (and it bears that meaning fairly), for he adds, that they are more anxious to make it a good story than a good life. Now, in this dramatic tendency of men, I see a considerable source of comfort for them. They throw many of their cares and sorrows, many of their failings and misdeeds, upon this dramatic being. In the course of life they often change the nature of the part. Now they will play the part of a successful man. That fails; and then they take up the part of an ill-used, or neglected individual: and so, in a hundred ways, they vary the character that is to be performed, according to the varying circumstances. Perhaps this shows in us the consciousness of what Emerson would call "the over soul," and how each man feels that there is within him something which does not quite correspond with the part that he him-

self plays—something that is greater and better than the individual, and which puts the individual off from it.

*Ellesmere.* This is somewhat hazy, and smacks of Leipsic, Jena, or Wittenburg ; but I must confess I think there is something in it : and probably there is no end to the adroit ways by which the soul of man contrives to adapt itself to the most terrible burthens.

*Milverton.* There is a little point which I must advert to ; not that it is perhaps worth mentioning in such a high and general argument as we have been maintaining, except that Mr. Midhurst himself sometimes condescended to introduce some little detail of misery to darken his gloomy picture. If you remember, he pointed out how amidst every two or three households there was one afflicted by some intractable creature who was not mad, nor idiotic, nor vicious, but capriciously irrational. This I admit to be a great burthen. But has he ever observed to how many households there is attached some helpful devoted person ? Often this person is a woman, not beautiful, not remarkably attractive to the outer world, but singularly amiable and unselfish, who smooths everything that would otherwise be rugged in domestic life, to whom all come with their griefs and their little injuries and their difficulties, and who seems to be sent almost providentially to enable the family to get through its troubles. Sometimes it is a maiden aunt, or an old friend, or a confidential servant ; but such lay brothers and sisters of charity are to be met with everywhere, and they help on the world amazingly.

*Dunsford.* You never said a truer thing : and it is not in the least beneath the tone of the argument, or disparaging to it, to name such a fact. Even in my retired way of life I have seen many instances of what you mention.

I do not wish to meddle much in this argument, and, as you know, I should treat it in a very different way from that which both of you have adopted : but I cannot avoid

remarking that Mr. Midhurst seemed to give a very unfair view of friendship. It is not the custom of modern days to make an exceeding parade of friendship, but I do not believe that, on that account, the existence of friendship is altogether abolished, or that the good offices of friends to one another are less frequent now than in the days of Damon and Pythias, or of Nisus and Euryalus. I should be very miserable if I thought they were.

*Milverton.* Well, I believe I have several friends ; but then, though I say it who should not say it, I think I deserve to have them, for I never ask them any disagreeable questions, never make any personal remarks, and always defend them behind their backs.

*Ellesmere.* Do you mean to say that you can continue to like a friend who begins to differ a little from you in dress, politics, or religion ; or whose fortunes diverge from your own ?

*Milverton.* All these things, dress, fortune, and the like, are mere wrappages, and go for nothing with me compared with the substantial ground of a man's character. I neither like you any better, nor (which is more magnanimous) any worse, for your having had some success in life, Ellesmere.

*Ellesmere.* You may talk of these things as wrappages, and affect to despise them ; but they are very like the extras in school bills, which are apt to mount up to as much as the principal charge. What a simile that would be for a common jury, composed of fathers of families ! I really quite regret throwing it away upon you. But to return to the subject,—you know, Milverton, you would not like me as well, and could not resist making a remark, if I were to come out dressed in what is called the height of the fashion.

*Milverton.* If I were to meet you, Ellesmere, coming down St. James's Street dressed as an Eastern dervish, I should make no remark at all about your costume, but

should begin talking about the weather and the shakiness of the ministry, or any of those common topics which Englishmen delight to discuss at windy corners of the cold streets. Men hesitate before they give up such a friend as I am, who is like a dog to them; their own dog, whose morning welcome of them is just the same, whether they have a leading article written for or against them in that day's *Times*.

*Ellesmere*. Yes, I have always said that your sense of justice is completely swallowed up in friendship.

*Milverton*. I think you are mistaken. If I were in power, I would not promote a friend unfairly for the world; but I am not called upon to judge him at every moment. There is a great deal too much of amateur judging in the world, and I say boldly that I like to find a defender and not a judge in my friend. We have all a sufficiently hard battle to fight in life, and we fight it a great deal the better from feeling that we have a wall of friendship (if I may so express myself) which we can stand up against, and have only to think of the foe in front of us. If I thought that, in society, you said against Dunsford and me the sharp things that you say against us to our faces, I should soon leave off liking you, if I possibly could; and when you came to Worth-Ashton, I should contrive to take you to a field I know of, where there are two or three remarkably cross, misunderstood bulls, who maintain a quarrel with the world in general,—having previously, without your knowledge, pinned on to your coat a red handkerchief. I would indeed.

*Ellesmere*. I believe you. The ferocity of people who live in the country is wonderful. I have no doubt that Dunsford would be an aider and abettor in this cruelty to a poor innocent lawyer, just because he likes to laugh at his friends a little. In London now we think nothing of this. However, I remember saying in my essay that a man who wants to rise in the world cannot afford much friendship,

because friends often speak so ill of one another ; so you see I am substantially with you. By the way, I wonder if there is such a thing as feminine friendship ?

*Mildred.* Of course there is. It is one of the calumnies that you get up against us, to assert that there is not ; just as you declare that we are great talkers, and I am sure one man, Sir John himself for instance, will talk as much as any seven women.

*Ellesmere.* Let us go back to the essay. Miss Vernon is so quick and incisive that there is no safety in attacking her. See how Mr. Midhurst bears attack. Have you anything more to say, Milverton ?

*Milverton.* Yes, I have one thing more. Mr. Midhurst throughout dwelt much upon the fears, terrors, and apprehensions of men.

*Ellesmere.* You know the French proverb, "*Les malheurs des malheurs sont ceux qui n'arrivent jamais.*"

*Milverton.* That was the very point I was coming to. Surely we might derive some comfort from finding that nothing is so bad as we have anticipated it would be, and that fully ninety-nine hundredths of the misfortunes we anticipate never come to pass. I must admit that we are wonderfully ingenious in the art of self-tormenting ; but really a little wisdom and courage might lift us out of the reach of our peace-destroying ingenuity.

The turn our conversation has just taken reminds me of a story of my father's.

There were two very old maids, sisters, who lived together. A running stream passed under their parlour window. A friend came to visit them one day, and found them in agonies of grief. "What is the matter, my dear ladies ?" he exclaimed. They bridled up, smiled amidst their tears, which still flowed plentifully, and said they were two old fools ; but declined to tell the cause of their misery. Their friend, who was their doctor, if I recollect rightly,



insisted upon knowing what was the matter ; and at last one of them confessed. “ ‘ Suppose,’ Bridget said to me, ‘ we had both been married : you know, my dear, it might have been. And suppose I had had a little boy ; and you a little girl ; and suppose that we had both been dandling them at this very window.’—‘ And suppose,’ said I, ‘ some horrid boy coming by had made a great noise. You know how nervous we are, sister, at noises. And suppose we had both let the children tumble into the water.’—‘ And suppose,’ said she, ‘ they had both been drowned.’ Then we began to cry ; for it would have been so dreadful, you know.” Here the two old ladies commenced crying again, and the doctor had some difficulty in comforting them. Now I say that most of us are just as foolish as Bridget and her sister, and keep on supposing, and supposing, and supposing, and making ourselves miserable about grievances quite as imaginary as those of the two aged spinsters.

*Ellesmere.* With your long memory, Milverton, you must have retained hosts of family stories, and I do not know that I have ever heard you tell one before, derived from family sources.

*Milverton.* No : the good stories of a family belong to the family. There is something sacred about them. You know how I hate, with an almost morbid hatred, all biographies except those of the greatest personages, and all publication of letters that can be avoided. This detestable publicity tends to destroy the sanctity of private life ; which, after all, gives the chief enjoyment to private life. Now I can write anything in a letter to you, Ellesmere—the crudest ideas, the strangest fancies, the most immature doubts, because you are one of those humane and excellent persons who burn all letters, except those which distinctly relate to pounds, shillings, and pence.

*Ellesmere.* Yes : I think it is a duty to burn them. I see now why you do not hesitate to pour out to me your

wildest notions on the currency, on fate, and on free-will, those probably being the three subjects upon which men write most nonsense. But give us another paternal story. I won't ask you again.

*Milverton.* No : I am firm.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I will tell you one of my own family stories ; though it must not be construed into a precedent, for I am a bad narrator. It is, however, so good a story in itself, and would read us all such an excellent lesson, that perhaps it is wrong in me never to have told it you before—considering too the hundreds of times it has been in my mind, and how much it has influenced me. It is about my grandmother. You recollect the old lady, Milverton ? Milverton and I, Mr. Midhurst, were at the same school together when we were very little urchins.

*Milverton.* Recollect her, of course I do ! Does one ever forget any of those good people who used to give us cakes and apples when we were boys, and regularly tip us every time we came to see them ? I may be a bad man, but I am not such an ungrateful wretch as that. But, to tell you the truth, my recollections of your grandmother, though tender, are full of awe, occasioned by an instrument she always carried with her. It pretended to be a parasol, but was in reality a long crook, upon which, I remember, she used to lean with folded arms. I thought she could reach me with that awful crook at any part of the garden, because once or twice, when I was snugly ensconced amongst the gooseberry-bushes, I had felt that formidable weapon in my collar, and had been pulled up by it, your grandmother exclaiming, “ You must not eat those now, my dear ; but the tree shall be saved for you, till the gooseberries become ripe.” Forget her, no ! besides she was the most beautiful old lady I ever saw, with one of those delicate roseate complexions which you sometimes see in very *douce* old people who have lived a quiet and wholesome

life in the country ; and I utter this praise of the old lady's beauty irrespective of the gooseberries and the apples, and the tarts and the sixpences.

*Ellesmere.* I am glad you have said it, for I should not ; being mindful of that exquisite *mot* of Talleyrand's on a similar occasion.

*Mr. Midhurst.* What is it ? I thought I knew every *mot* current of Talleyrand's, as all diplomatists are bound to do, but I do not know to what you allude.

*Ellesmere.* A man was speaking largely about the beauty of his mother, when Talleyrand thus interrupted him, "*C'était, donc, Monsieur, votre père qui n'était pas si bien.*"

Observe the delicate felicity of the words "*donc*" and "*si bien.*" If he had said that the man or his father was ugly, it would have been, comparatively, a feeble story.

Well, but my grandmother was beautiful. She was, moreover, a portly dame of commanding presence, five feet eight inches in height ; and, unlike many tall people, she did not attempt to conceal her height by stooping, or any poor device of that kind, but stood as upright as a dart, and rather made more than less of herself. This is part of my story, and, to appreciate it, you must have before you an unusually tall and noble-looking woman, always dressed in a very stiff silk, which, when the old lady was out of it, would, I imagine, have stood up by itself. By the way, I was not a great favourite with her ; and it may serve to explain her character and illustrate the story, if I tell you the reason why. Little boys in my time used to be dressed very finely, and there was an unfortunate suit of cerulean blue, braided with silver lace, which, for my sins, I was put into at about six years old. Now I was a very meditative little imp. I believe I never thought so well, or so closely, as when I began to think ; when it was a new thing to think. One gets tired of thinking, as one does of everything else, as one gets older.

I did not, however, spoil my clothes in playing with other boys, but I did worse, I spoilt them myself by utter carelessness about them ; and unfortunately, on an unlucky day for me, my grandmother discovered me clad in those detestable ceruleans, ruminating upon some difficult subject or other which vexed my childish mind, at the bottom of that semi-dry ditch which was at the end of the garden, Milverton. I have no doubt I was hauled up by that crook of which you retain so keen a remembrance, and I suppose I was well scolded ; and I fancy that ever afterwards compassion and regret used to enter into her expressions of regard for me, when she thought of what would become of a boy who could go and deliberately sit down in a ditch in his new cerulean jacket and trousers, “decored,” as Caleb Balderston would have said, with silver braiding.

In few words, she was a pattern of propriety, not to say conventionality, of neatness, cleanliness, and fastidious orderliness. No wonder she had an affectionate horror of me, who have never been noted for any of these virtues ; but it was affectionate, most affectionate.

My story goes back to an earlier date—before I had made my appearance in the world.

My mother made what is called a good marriage. At that time the theatres were in their glory, and my father frequently took his young bride to see John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. They also used to go to the Opera. My grandmother lived in a cottage (which was washed about as often as a Dutch house), a few miles from town. My father and mother naturally wished my grandmother to partake their pleasures, and they called one morning to tell her that they had secured a good box at the Opera, and that she must come with them. The story will show that she never had been at an opera before, and I doubt much whether she had ever been at a play. She consented, however, and they all went together. My grandmother cared not a straw for

music, but she sat through the opera nobly, quietly, and enduringly, as an old lady would do, who had seen a good deal of life, had buried two husbands, had had her troubles, and knew that it was her duty to sit patiently through a great many things that were uninteresting, or even disagreeable. Then, alas ! came the ballet. She looked on at that for a few minutes ; then she plucked her daughter by the arm, and exclaimed passionately, " Anne, how can you look at these goings on ? I am ashamed of you ! " My mother, in terror, tried to pacify her. There was no getting away immediately : the carriage was not ordered till the end of the performance. My grandmother looked on for a few more minutes at the dancing hours ; then, rising deliberately, she turned her ample person to the illustrious audience, and withdrawing a few paces, sat down with her back to the stage, and remained in that position to the end of what she called " that wicked performance. "

Now, you know, none of us here present have ever done so bold a thing as that for conscience' sake. Knowing the old lady well, I have no doubt that she suffered agonies before she resolved to take such a public step,—before she violated all the proprieties and conventionalities that were a large part of her being. The Royal family was probably there. She must turn her back upon princes, dukes, and lords ; she must offend her son-in-law, for whom, as a sensible, prosperous man, she had a great respect ; she must wound and offend her daughter, whom she regarded with the worshipping affection with which such simple people regard their children, when they are much better educated than themselves. But the higher proprieties were imperative, and she must mark her sense of what was indecorous, let the world (to which she in general bent so humbly) say what it might.

I am a feeble and degenerate descendant of such a woman, but I have sometimes sustained myself in difficulties

of a much humbler kind by saying to myself, "John Ellesmere, you must in this instance make up your mind to turn your back upon the whole audience, as your grandmother did before you. It is very painful, but it must be done."

By the way, I must mention to you how my mother always concluded the story; which, seeing that it amused me much, she told me often. "You may imagine, my dear, that your father and I never asked your grandmother again to accompany us to the Opera."

*Dunsford.* I really am much obliged to you, Ellesmere, for this story about your grandmother: there is much substance in it.

*Milverton.* I think it is one of the most interesting stories I ever heard, and it explains a great deal of Ellesmere's character, who is always protesting and turning his back upon the audience.

*Ellesmere.* You were all horribly afraid, I know, at the beginning, that it was going to be a love-story; and one really is so tired of them. I mean, some long vacation, to write a novel, in which everybody shall hate everybody else right through the book, in the first, second, and third volumes; and there shall be no making friends, even in the last chapter. It shall be about a trust estate, and there shall be a large sum of money in Consols, which shall be the heroine, and there shall be a great many trustees, and a great many cestuique trusts. It shall be profoundly interesting. People will sit up at nights to cry over it; and there will be a cheap edition too numerous to calculate, which will be sold at railway stations as a companion to that excellent little book of Lord St. Leonard's. I have even planned the gay-coloured covering, which shall be daubed over with wigs and gowns, and bags of money, and trustees drowning themselves. There will, however, I am afraid, be a great railway accident in consequence of this publication, for the very stokers will take to reading it at

dangerous times. I am sure those stalwart fellows must be very tired of love-stories.

My success in this new career will be so great, that I shall give up my profession. My next novel will be an agricultural one. A broad-share plough will be the hero. There will be a great battle of scarifiers. There will also be some affection, not to say love, in this novel—that of a country gentleman for his live stock.

*Milverton.* To go back for a moment from your forthcoming novels to the story you have just told. I am afraid I should fall into terrible disgrace with your grandmother, and should get no more apples or gooseberries from her. But, the truth is, I am much more scandalised by the ugliness of ballet dancing than by its impropriety. I have not attended such a thing as a *ballet* for many years. The atmosphere of most theatres becomes pestiferous to me about eleven o'clock. But I remember it used to infuse anything but joy into my mind, when I saw a poor creature trip down the stage resting its weight on its toes. I could not get over the sensation of what pain it must have cost to acquire that peculiar mode of locomotion. I admired the labour, and thought that it would have ensured success in any profession. A similar amount of labour would surely go far to make a Lord Chancellor.

*Ellesmere.* Sir, you see before you a man who aspires to be both a Lord Chancellor, and a good ballet dancer. Why should not Queen Victoria have a dancing Lord Chancellor, as well as Queen Elizabeth?

Hereupon Ellesmere, who is very fond of these antics, began to dance in his grotesque fashion. After this, there was no more sustained talk; and thus ended our discussion upon Mr. Midhurst's essay "On the Miseries of Human Life."

## CHAPTER XII.

## ON PLEASANTNESS.

I AM rather ashamed of this chapter, as I occupy too large a space in it. However, I suppose we should take with a good grace any honour that is thrust upon us. I always recollect in such cases Dr. Johnson's well-known reply, "Was it for me, Sir, to bandy compliments with my sovereign?" This was when George the Third had held a conversation with the Doctor, and had said something complimentary to him.

I will now mention how it was that I came to write the following essay, which was a most unexpected and not a very welcome undertaking to me. I do not find much difficulty in writing sermons for my rustic audience, who have no thought or wish to reply to me; but it is a very different matter to write an essay which is to be read to such men as Ellesmere, Milverton, and Midhurst, who are to have an unlimited power of picking what I say to pieces.

It was the day after Mr. Midhurst's essay had been read. The weather was rough, and the ladies did not accompany us in a walk that we took by the side of the Moselle. We began talking of the essay and conversa-



tion of the preceding day. Milverton seemed, I thought, to have laid aside the advocate's part which he had taken up, and to agree more for the moment with Mr. Midhurst than I should have expected. I bethought me that their conversation was a little like that of two barristers who have been maintaining the extreme views of their clients, and not bating one iota of their pretensions while in court, but who walk away together and perhaps talk quite fairly and reasonably about the case. However, I will let them speak for themselves, as far as I can recollect what they said.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I dealt with you very mercifully yesterday. I did not say a quarter of what I might have said. I did not dwell upon pain, fear, shame, or remorse. Look at the apprehensiveness of some men. I cannot describe it better than by likening it to the timidity of a defenceless animal which has a thousand enemies. You go into a wood, and sit quietly for a time. You hear a rustling noise, and see some timid creature that is unaware of your presence. You watch it. The most striking thing to notice is its constant terror. It nibbles a bit, looks round timorously, and is startled by the slightest noise. Its apprehensive eyes and ears are ever in movement. It knows the number of its enemies. It is like a thoughtful man.

*Ellesmere.* Come: this is not fair. You did compare man to a lizard. If you begin to liken him now to a rabbit, or a squirrel, I shall uphold the dignity of man, and shall compare him to a jolly, laughing hyæna. Surely, we prey as much as we are preyed upon.

*Mr. Midhurst.* This is your way of defending, is it? Well, then, there is another topic I did not touch upon; and that is,—the length of time that all vexation, worry,

and calamity take to work themselves out. You read or hear of something disastrous ; and you almost fancy that it did not take more time to be acted and to be suffered than it does to be narrated.

*Milverton.* This is but too true ; here you have made an excellent point. I have always felt that the great difficulty in writing or in reading history is to appreciate the length of time that adverse transactions occupied. A disastrous campaign is soon narrated ; but the wearisome marchings and counter-marchings, the long sicknesses, the disheartening times of waiting (perhaps in some unhealthy but well-fortified spot) for the approaches of an enemy, are not appreciated. In fiction, too, how difficult it is to give a notion of long-extended misery. In *Macbeth* how rapidly the action moves on ; and it is not until you come to reflect, that you perceive the long course of abject cowardly guilt, of murder breeding murder, that the tyrant has had to go through ; otherwise his weariness comes too soon upon you. So, in an ordinary man's life, you read of a time of ill-health, want of employment, pecuniary difficulty, discord with his friends or his followers, and the like. It is told in a sentence, and does not make much impression upon you. But this adversity took years, perhaps, to be surmounted. Your eye passes from eminence to eminence, whether of prosperity or adversity, that the man occupied ; but the long damp valleys that he made his painful way through, or the deserts that he sojourned in, are not much thought of by you. There was little to be told about them.

*Ellesmere.* Little is said also of the smiling peaceful plains which he passed over. Do not let us exercise our imagination all on one side.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Again, I did not make enough of mischance. I pictured one or two unpleasant positions ; but I did not touch upon the numerous mischances which happen to all men. A poor woman has an idiot child, and she

gains her living by needle-work. This is a story I heard or read the other day. The child was ill, and she persuaded her employer to let her take home some velvet, or rich stuff, that she was working upon. For days she did not quit her garret ; but, unfortunately, one morning, having hid her work, as she thought, she went out on some domestic errand. On her return she found her idiot boy, with smiling self-satisfied face, occupied in cutting the velvet into strips ; and he had been for some time about it, for the impoverished mother said, that it would take three months of her work to pay for the mischief done by the idiotic diligence of the poor child. I can't tell why this particular story occurs to me ; but life is full to the brim of such things. They make anecdotes for other people, and furrows on the cheeks of the sufferers.

*Milverton.* It reminds me of the mishap of a dear friend of mine, an eminent man of letters, whose manuscript of a second volume of a great work, put away in a cupboard, was quietly consumed each morning in lighting the fire. I remember his telling me that it cost him the labour of fifteen months to rewrite this volume ; and that he attributed to this mishap a failing in his eyesight not yet recovered.

*Ellesmere.* If I were to follow your example, I too could tell moving stories of flaws in title-deeds, of losses of important papers, and of slight mischances which certainly have proved hideous disasters. But Milverton gave, the other day, what answer could be given to these things, when he said that all past suffering is a possession. Rather large and fine words, to be sure ! But still they are better than nothing. And there is some truth in them, you may depend.

*Mr. Midhurst.* All I want you to consider is the number and weight of misfortunes that beset mankind. I have no doubt that, sitting on this gate for the whole morning, we might, without pause or intermission, relate mischances and

disasters of which we ourselves have had full knowledge ; and they should all be such as have sprung from the most trivial causes, in which the sufferers shall have either drifted, or fallen, or been snared, into misfortune.

And then there is the fearful adjunct that the destroying worm, or fly, or aphid, always attacks the plant when it is weak ; and so, when a man has met with one misfortune, he is in the most likely condition to receive another.

*Ellesmere.* Ha, ha, ha ! if that simile does not win Milverton, nothing can. I must divert you for a moment from your charming and light-hearted conversation to something that happened last summer at Worth-Ashton. You know how all enthusiasts have the knack of impressing their enthusiasm upon you. Milverton was planting turnips, and could think or talk of nothing else. I became quite agitated about turnips. He had, of course, some wonderful new thing which was to prevent the devastation of the turnip-fly. The wonderful new thing was tried, and up came the turnips magnificently. Milverton's heart was glad, and there was in it the "pride that goeth before a fall." One morning we went down to see the turnips—indeed what morning did we not go down for the same joyful purpose ? When I looked at the field, I saw at once that it was all over with those lovely plants which had cost us so much thought and trouble. I hoped that Milverton, who is rather blind, would not perceive the fatal gaps. But what country gentleman is there, however indifferent his sight, who does not miss at once his dear turnips ? That wretched fly has before now received some bad language from rough farmers, but I doubt whether it ever met with such an objurgation as that addressed to it by Milverton. You know his Brahminical horror of taking away life ; but I do believe he would have killed a turnip-fly that day, if he could have met with one. He read commination services over these unwelcome creatures. He said they were like ignorant

Members of Parliament, who can produce no good measures of their own, but can spoil those of other people—just as if it were the object of the turnip-flies to grow turnips. He compared them to the armies of despotic monarchs blackening the land as they moved along to conquest. At last, turning fiercely to me, whom he suspected of not sympathising sufficiently with him, he exclaimed, “Sir, they embody all law.” “And physic and divinity,” I replied. Judge, then, whether Mr. Midhurst is not skilful and lucky in bringing in the fly and the *aphis devastator* at this particular point of the conversation.

*Mr. Midhurst.* It is just what I said. Miserable as this world is, we have it not to ourselves, but are liable to fatal mischances caused by the meanest creatures which share the world with us.

But, to return to our subject. You must admit, what I began by saying, that I was very merciful in my essay, and did not dwell too largely upon the misery of mankind.

*Milverton.* Yes, I will admit that it is difficult to exaggerate the misery that is to be found in the world. Misery is often of such a composite character, so exquisitely compounded of shame, vexation, error, and misfortune. You took good instances, Mr. Midhurst, of men in miserable positions; but the catalogue that might be made is numerous and varied beyond description. Think now of the misery of watching the wasting away of a person working for you, to repair the ruin which you have greatly caused—not an uncommon position in private life. Then there is this circumstance to be noted, that oftentimes the qualities which lead to error, and bring on disaster, are those which make the individual feel the consequences of that error or disaster most keenly. If it were only hard, strong, coarse men that do wrong, and get into trouble, there would be a good deal less suffering than there is in the world; but it

is often the sensitive, the imaginative, the generous, that commit the greatest errors ; and dreadful is the retribution for them.

*Ellesmere.* I suppose it has crossed most men's minds, how they would like to have been cattle. [We were then close by a herd of cows]. Think of the delight of being one of these mild-eyed, peaceful, ruminating creatures, which pay no taxes, are never in debt——

*Mr. Midhurst.* Settle their quarrels without law——

*Ellesmere.* Have no apprehensions of death, and are without regrets and remorse. Then, again, these happy animals have no kind friends, Job's comforters, to improve upon their misfortunes. If one of them breaks bounds, leads the whole herd after her, and they are driven back with blows and curses, she does not get blame from her companions. Let a number of human beings be in the same plight, and see what they will say and do to the unfortunate person who gave them the unsuccessful advice, or the bad example, which they were so ready to follow.

*Milverton.* What you said about Job's comforters is very true. When you tell a friend of your errors and your griefs, he is pretty nearly sure, unless he is a very wise and considerate person, to point out to you that you should not have done as you did at the beginning of the transaction—as if we did not all know that.

I must confess I have a little of Ellesmere's envy for the felicity of cows, as creatures which can do no wrong. Indeed, when I see how much of each man's misfortunes arise out of his own nature, I do not wonder at a saying of an eccentric friend of mine, who declares that he thinks it is by no means an unfortunate thing to be imprisoned for many years, especially for the most energetic years of one's life, when one is likely to do most harm. I could not help thinking, when my friend said this to me, that he was unconsciously talking Pascal, who says somewhere :—that all

the misery in the world has arisen from men not being able to sit quietly in a room.

*Ellesmere.* In all this, Milverton, are you not sliding over to the other side? I thought you were Mr. Merryman yesterday, and now you are Mr. Doubly Dolorous.

*Milverton.* No: you interrupted me some time ago, and so I did not finish what I was going to say. After I had drawn that mournful picture of a man's watching another perishing in the endeavour to avert the ruin which he, the spectator, has mainly caused,—as sad a picture nearly as there is on earth,—I was looking around to see what comfort could be given in such a case: and I saw that the only relief was in that large contemplation of life and nature which makes us recollect, with profound humility, that we are not altogether our own making; that we do not know what is good for any one; and that there must be something which will explain and justify and transform into beauty all this suffering. Whatever may be said of the great controversy of free-will and necessity, it must be admitted, practically, that a man's will is often not by any means the principal factor in his actions.

*Dunsford.* These are dangerous topics. Shall I tell you what I have been thinking about while you have been talking to-day? and, indeed, the same thought occupied me a great deal while Mr. Midhurst was delivering his essay yesterday. Since men are so miserable, always say a kind word when you can, and do a kind action when you can: it may come in so opportunely: it may save a man from despair.

*Ellesmere.* Upon my word, Dunsford, that is a very good saying of yours. It has a subtlety about it, too, which is not often connected with benevolent sayings.

*Milverton.* It is very humane, and very true. I remember an instance of its application to myself. I had been suffering from a great concourse of vexation and misfortune.

You know how such times come upon us all. We are ill, depressed, disheartened, obliged to work, and our work is clearly unsuccessful. Other people's misfortunes come at the same time. Our friends then die or fall into disaster, as if they made a point of doing so at the time when we can least bear it; and at last you have had so much bad news of different kinds, that you are afraid of opening a letter. All the old wounds begin to ache, and your former errors seem to take that opportunity for showing themselves in their full magnitude. Looking back, we wonder how we contrived to live through such a period of disaster and disheartenment. There is a time in most men's lives when in a humble way they resemble Job sitting amongst the ashes, drinking in the full bitterness of complicated misfortune. Alas, they have seldom Job's patience to sustain them in their minor calamities.

Well, I remember that there came to me then one day a letter from a man I knew little of, encouraging me to a great undertaking, and offering all possible aid and furtherance on his part for the attainment of a personal object of ambition, which he thought would be very dear to me. Now it was not dear at all. I would not have walked across the room to attain it; but that letter cheered me amazingly, and I set to work with renewed vigour that morning.

I am not fond of much introspection, but I could not help asking myself:—"What is it that cheers you? You do not care a straw about the thing which this man holds out to you. You will have a difficult letter to write in refusing his offer, and showing him that you do not think much of what he supposes would be a great felicity. There is, perhaps, some implied praise in the offer; but you have had a great deal of praise and a great deal of censure in your time, and have become as indifferent to both as it is possible perhaps for any mortal to become. What is there then to cheer you?"



In the first place, the unexpected kindness, which goes for much. In the next place, the immense encouragement it gives you to see that you do not appear such a feckless, withered creature to another, as, in moments of despondency, you appear to yourself. You take refuge in that other's opinion, and say, after all, there are life and hope in me yet. The sick man is really very ill—no fancy about that—but the cheery doctor comes in, rubs his hands, talks of the weather, wonders what the division will be, considers whether the Ministry will resign or dissolve if they are beaten, and in fact treats you so thoroughly as if you were getting better, that the ailment begins to drop off a little while he is with you. You cannot resist such a rush of life as the doctor has brought into the room.

Yes : Dunsford is quite right :—always say a kind word if you can, if only that it may come in perhaps with singular opportuneness,—entering some mournful man's darkened room, like a beautiful fire-fly, whose happy circumnavigations he cannot but watch, forgetting his many troubles.

At this moment we approached a little roadside chapel, in which there was an image of the Virgin, and where a poor man, his market basket laid aside, showed by his meek face and contrite gesture the prayerful adoration that was going on in his mind. We passed him in silence ; and, when we had got out of his hearing, Mr. Midhurst resumed the conversation.

*Mr. Midhurst.* You Protestants may say what you like, but the wonder is, not that these poor people have adored the Virgin, but that any of them were ever persuaded to leave off that adoration. Does not each man feel that if ever he has met with real pity and tenderness, it is from some woman—some mother or some sister ? These poor

people idealise all that, and find some one before whom to pour out a cry from the heart which they might hardly venture to express in the presence of a divine Judge, however omnipotent in mercy.

*Milverton.* It is very natural.

*Ellesmere.* It certainly is. Even Dunsford must admit that.

*Dunsford.* Yes. I do admit it.

*Milverton.* And you would hardly like to see it taken away.

*Dunsford.* Not unless I could see a likelihood of something better being put in its place. But this is not the time, or the occasion, for entering into a discussion upon the difference between the Churches, Protestant and Papal.

*Ellesmere.* We really have considerable merit as friends. I suppose we speak as sincerely to one another as any people ever did.

*Dunsford* (not sorry to change the conversation). I saw the other day in an American writer, a humorous account of the number of persons that take part in any conversation. He says:—"When John and Thomas, for instance, are talking together, it is natural enough that among the six there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension.

\* \* \* \* \*

I think, I said, I can make it plain to Benjamin Franklin here, that there are at least six personalities distinctly to be recognised as taking part in that dialogue between John and Thomas.

- |               |   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
| Three Johns . | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The real John ; known only to his Maker.</li> <li>2. John's ideal John ; never the real one, and often very unlike him.</li> <li>3. Thomas's ideal John, never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.</li> </ol> |
|---------------|---|---|

- Three Thomases { 1. The real Thomas.  
2. Thomas's ideal Thomas.  
3. John's ideal Thomas.

Only one of the three Johns is taxed; only one can be weighed on a platform-balance; but the other two are just as important in the conversation."<sup>1</sup>

*Ellesmere.* Six persons only! There are many more. There is John's newspaper, talking entirely with the voice of John. Then there is Thomas's newspaper, talking with the voice of Thomas.

*Milverton.* Then there is John's dog, quite invisible to Thomas, but which bites John's legs whenever John is about to say something more than usually sincere. This dog is, what the world will say if Thomas should repeat what John says; and the ungainly animal exercises the greatest influence over the conversation, restraining it at all points.

*Ellesmere.* I see that three people are a mob.

*Milverton.* Well, so they are, especially if they are mob-guided, mob-fearing people.

*Ellesmere.* Has not Dunsford been brilliant to-day? It was he who gave us this capital quotation. He put forth that amiable aphorism which ruled the conversation ever afterwards. Let me see, what was it? Oh! I remember:—always say an ill-natured thing to a man when you can: it may come in at a time when he is inflated by prosperity, and may do him a great deal of good. Homely and obvious, but true! Altogether I say that Dunsford has been brilliant to-day—a happy compound of Machiavelli, Pascal, and Dr. Watts. Why does not such a man give us his views in a sustained and effective manner? We have never had an essay from him, and we

<sup>1</sup> *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* By OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES, pp. 58, 59. Boston, 1859.

must have one. If he likes to make a contrast to mine, he can write an essay on the art of sinking in life. But something of the kind we must have from him.

There was such a hubbub of entreaty, which was renewed in the evening, when the girls were present, who joined in the clamour, that in a weak moment I gave way, and consented to write an essay. I was the more easily persuaded, as I had not to hunt for a subject ; the one I have chosen having often occurred to me, while I have been listening to the conversations of my friends.

I did not take a long time to prepare the essay, and I read it to my friends one morning while we were sitting in the balcony of an hotel in one of the small towns that overlook the Moselle, which was flowing beneath in a reddish turbid stream, having taken its hue from those red cliffs which remind the Englishman of Sidmouth and the neighbouring coast of South Devon. I have a particular affection for earth of that colour : it goes so well, as painters say, with the bright green herbage above it.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## ON PLEASANTNESS.

THERE is a gift that is almost a blow, and there is a kind word that is munificence : so much is there in the way of doing things. Every one must have noticed to what a large extent real kindness may be deformed and negatived by manner. But this bad manner corresponds with something not right in the character — generally some want of kindly apprehensiveness, which a pleasant person would be sure to have. I am going to give an essay upon pleasantness, a quality which I believe to be very rare in the world, to proceed only or chiefly from goodness of nature, and to be thoroughly harmonious with the Christian character.

People often suppose that fineness of manners, skilful hypocrisy, thoughtless good-humour, and, at the highest, a sort of tact which has much worldliness in it, are the foundations for pleasantness in society. I am sure this is all wrong, and that these foundations lie much lower. A false man never is pleasant. You treat him with a falseness, bred from his own, in pretending to be pleased ; and he goes away supposing that he has deceived you, and has made himself very agreeable. But men are

much less rarely deceived by falseness of character than is supposed, and there is mostly a sense of relief when the false person has taken his departure.

Pleasantness is the chief element of agreeable companionship ; and this pleasantness is not merely not a function of the intellect, but may have scarcely anything to do with what is purely intellectual. Now there may be such a thing as good society, when witty and well-mannered people, who do not care much for one another, meet together ; but I venture to assert that society does not assume its highest form—is not in fact delightful—unless affection pervades it. When you are with people who, you are conscious, have a regard for you, your powers of pleasing and of being pleased expand almost indefinitely. It is not merely that in such society you feel safe from backbiting, and can leave the room without any apprehension of your character being torn to pieces in your absence. It is not merely that what you then say and do is sure to be well received, and the least possible misconstruction be put upon your sayings and doings. But there is something beyond all this—something beyond the domains of logic—which produces a sunny atmosphere of satisfaction that raises your powers to the highest when you are with good and loving people. Now if this is true of society in general, it is probably true of more restricted companionship ; and kindness of disposition must be admitted to be one of the principal elements of pleasantness in a companion. Of course sympathy insures a certain good companionship. But

we have no right to expect to meet with many sympathetic people in the course of our life. Pleasantness has a much wider, if a lower, sphere. The pleasant man to you is the man you can rely upon ; who is tolerant, forbearing, and faithful.

Let us consider the hindrances to pleasantness. Fastidiousness is a great hindrance to the formation of a pleasant character. People who have every other merit are prevented from being pleasant persons by fastidiousness. Again, the habit of over-criticism is another hindrance to pleasantness. We are not fond of living always with our judges ; and daily life will not bear the unwholesome scrutiny of an over-critical person.

Even refined manners, if they have reference only to the refined person himself, may be a drawback from pleasantness rather than an aid to it. On the other hand, that rudeness, which some people mistake for frankness, is never found in a pleasant person.

Flattery, even when there is a dash of truth in it, is hostile to pleasantness, for flattery is full of fear to the person flattered. You feel that the man that flatters you now, will, under a change of circumstances, be among the first to condemn you.

A singular hindrance to pleasantness in man or woman, and one that requires to be dwelt upon, is the habit of exigence. That last is not a common English word, but I do not see why we should not borrow from the French a word which may fairly be adopted into our

own language. It is worth while to inquire a little into the causes that make people tiresomely exigent. This habit springs from many sources : from a grasping affectionateness ; from a dissatisfied humility ; from egotism ; from want of imagination, or from a disordered imagination.

Let us take a common instance of its practical working. You are thrown into intimacy with a person by some peculiar train of circumstances ; you relish the company of that person : and you two become friends. The circumstances change ; and naturally, perhaps inevitably, you do not see so much of one another as you used to do. If he is exigent, he makes this a matter of offence. His dignity is hurt, his egotism is aroused, his affectionateness is wounded, and his want of imagination prevents him from seeing that this discontinuance of intimacy is inevitable. The truth is we are not guided in our companionship with others by our likings only, for companionship is greatly controlled by external circumstances. Peevish, exigent persons will not perceive this, and will complain about broken friendship until they often succeed in breaking it. This class of persons must have affection proved to them ; and by such a habit of mind they become exceedingly tiresome.

The foregoing is but one instance of the tiresomeness of exigence ; but it is very multiform and varied : and for no given day can you thoroughly satisfy a person who has suffered this habit of mind to develop itself to a morbid extent, and who is always thinking whether he



or she is sufficiently loved, honoured, and regarded. Such people make those about them timid and ill at ease from the constant fear lest they should give offence ; and thus the chief charm of companionship is blotted or effaced.

It may appear to detract from the high merits of a pleasant person when it is asserted as very desirable, that he should have a good opinion of himself. He can, however, do without this good opinion of himself, if he have a noble constancy of nature, for he is then very apt to attribute a similar constancy to others, and is not prone to believe that he is the subject of any intentional slighting. The self-reliant, hearty, uncomplaining person, believing that everybody thinks well of him, and means kindly by him, creates good and kind thoughts in others, and walks about in an atmosphere of pleasantness. To form a pleasant character it had better even be a little obtuse than over-sensitive and exigent.

I might go on enumerating the many hindrances to pleasantness ; and, with few exceptions, they would be found to consist in moral defects such as those I have just commented upon.

There is a class of unpleasant people often met with in the world, whose unpleasantness it is difficult to assign the cause for. They are not necessarily unkind persons : they are not ungenerous : and they do not appear to act or talk from any malice. But somehow or other they are mostly unfortunate in what they say. They ask the

wrong thing, or they omit to ask the right. They bring forward the disagreeable reminiscence, the ludicrous anecdote about you which you would rather not hear repeated in a large company, the painful circumstance which you wish was well buried and out of sight. If you have any misfortune, they rush to prove to you that your own folly is the cause. If you are betrayed, they knew that it would be so, and remember that they have often told you so. They never seem to know that there may be a time when they should abstain from wisdom, and abound in consolation. They cannot imagine that the poor unfortunate man is not in a state just then to bear all this wisdom. In fact, to use a metaphor, it seems as if they had supernaturally large feet, with which they go stamping about and treading upon other people's toes in all directions. You think that they can have no feelings themselves; but you find that they suffer as much as other persons when they have to endure people with natures like their own. They appear, if I may say so, to be persons of thoroughly awkward minds. But this alone will not explain the nature of such a peculiar class of individuals. After much meditation upon them, I have come to the conclusion that they are, in general, self-absorbed people. Now to be self-absorbed is a very different thing from being selfish, or being of a hard nature. Such persons, therefore, may be very kind, may even be very sensitive; but the habit of looking at everything from their own point of view, of never travelling out of themselves, prevails even in their kindest and



most sympathetic moments ; and so they do and say the most unfeeling things without any ill intention whatever. They are much to be pitied as well as blamed ; and the end is, that they seldom adopt ways of pleasantness, until they are beaten into them by a long course of varied misfortune, which enables them to look at another's griefs and errors from his point of view, because it has already become their own.

I began by saying, how rare pleasantness is ! Look round at the eminent men of any age : are many of them pleasant ? Pursue your researches throughout society : the pleasant people will never be found to be so numerous as to fatigue you in counting them up. Then, again, some persons are pleasant only when they are with one companion ; others only in a large company, where they can shine. Whereas, the really pleasant person is pleasant everywhere, and with everybody.

The most skilful guidance of self-interest, the uttermost watchfulness of craft, will not succeed for any long time in making a man agreeable. The real nature soon breaks out ; and it is this nature that eventually makes, or un-makes, the pleasantness of the character in your estimation.

As a remarkable illustration of this, it may be noted that harshness to another person goes some way to destroy a man's pleasantness to you. Putting it at the lowest, you never feel secure with such a man that what he manifests to others, will not, sooner or later, be shown to you. To insure pleasantness, there must be genuine

kindness and a respect for humanity. Indeed, I would go further, and would say, that a pleasant person is likely to be polite to a dog. I have no doubt Sir Walter Scott was.

If I were to attempt to describe a pleasant person, I should say that he must be imaginative, and given to exercise his imagination in behalf of others ; as he will thus be disposed to make the best of everything and everybody. His confidence in the goodwill of others inspires them with a like confidence in him. Moreover, he will be one who does not expect too much of human beings or of the world in which he lives. Many men, having begun by entertaining hopes impossible to be realised, vent their disappointment ever afterwards upon all those with whom they come in contact, and are anything but pleasant people.

A certain receptivity coincides well with pleasantness in a character ; but this is totally distinct from a habit of mere concession which you feel to belong to weakness of character. Above all, there is a largeness of nature to be observed in the men who are remarkable for pleasantness. They may be irritable in temper ; they may have plenty of failings and of vices ; but they are never captious, tiresome, small-minded, small-hearted people. Consider Alcibiades, Julius Cæsar, Charlemagne, Henry Fitz Empress, Leo the Tenth, Lord Bacon, Shakspeare, Charles the Second of England, Bolingbroke, Louis the Fourteenth, Bishop Berkeley, Mirabeau, Fox, the late Lord Melbourne, Sir Walter Scott, Goethe, and Burns ;

and you will see that what I have said has some truth in it.

It is one of the most certain characteristics of a supremely pleasant person that he is at his ease in every society, is unembarrassed with a prince, and, what is far more difficult, is not uncomfortable with his own servant, if he is thrown into near society with him, as on a journey.

Lord Bacon, commenting upon diet, declares that there should be a variety, but that it should tend to the more generous extreme. That is exactly what should happen in the formation of a pleasant character. It should tend to credulity rather than to suspicion, to generosity rather than to parsimoniousness, be apt to think well rather than to think ill of others, looking everywhere for the excuse instead of the condemning circumstance.

A man blessed with such a character it is good fortune to meet ; and speaking with him at the corner of the street enlivens the beginning, and cheers the end of a working day. "*Gratior it dies*" applies to the presence of such a person more than it ever did to an Augustus or a Mæcenas.

Now I maintain that it would be a very laudable ambition to endeavour to become a pleasant person ; and that it is not at all a work left for fools or for merely empty good-natured persons. There are many who are almost dying for fame, who are longing for great office which they will probably fill badly, who think life wonderfully well spent if they can amass a sum of money which

they will not know what to do with when they have got it. I venture to put before them a new ambition—that of becoming pleasant to their fellow-creatures. It is a path in which they will not be jostled by a crowd of competitors.

It might be thought that women, who are excluded from some of the higher objects of ambition, would be especially inclined to cultivate pleasantness; and I do think that they are pleasanter than men. But still there are a great many hard, unpleasant women; and, judging from what little I have seen of the world, I should say that women do not cultivate pleasantness to that extent that might be expected of them. The reason probably is, that they make their circle a very limited one, and are content, I suppose, with being exceedingly agreeable in that circle.

I have been mainly thinking of that pleasantness (the only kind that I have any faith in) which proceeds from sweetness of disposition and broad geniality of nature. But it will be instructive, as well as curious, to observe how rare it is that men are, intellectually speaking, pleasant,—in short, how few persons excel in conversation. This man spoils conversation by asking large questions which have not been fairly worked up to in the course of the conversation. That man is too verbose, and talks in a parliamentary fashion. Another is too exhaustive. He takes every case that can happen. You see beforehand that there is only one branch of the subject which he is really going to deal with, or to say anything new

about ; and your impatience is not slight as he calls up and dismisses the various parts of the question which he is *not* going to enter into. Then there is the man who interrupts all good talk with bad jesting. Then there is the parenthetical talker—often an excellent, scrupulous man—who qualifies every adjective with a parenthesis ; and if, unhappily, he indulges in a narrative, scatters it into fragments by many needless explanations and qualifications. He is particular in fixing a date which has nothing whatever to do with the gist of the story. Then there is the utterly unmethodical talker, who overruns his game ; who has come to the end of a story or an argument, before he has well begun it ; and yet occupies more time than if he took things up in an orderly manner. Then there is the man who deals in repetition. Again, there is a large class of persons who talk famously, who have none of the defects before mentioned, who are bright in repartee, swift in rejoinder, terse in statement, and thoroughly skilful as combatants. But combat is what they love, and sophistry is what they clothe themselves in. You feel that it is a perfect chance as to which side they will take in any argument. In fact it chiefly depends upon what others have said, for these men are sure to oppose. When you are talking with a man of that class, you feel that if you had not taken this side, he would not have taken that. And if, just to try him, you veer skilfully round, you soon find him occupying the position which you have abandoned. Now, good conversation is not law, and you do not want to have it made

the mere sport of intellectual advocacy. I grieve to say that such a man as Dr. Johnson was one of this class, and with me it would have taken off great part of the pleasure of listening to him. On the other hand, in a conversation with Burke, you might have had what was lengthy, or what was declamatory, but you would have had the real outcome of the man's mind,—and that to me is what is precious in conversation. Again, turning to a new fault, you have very clever men whose opinions you would like to learn, but they are over-cautious. They love to elicit other people's thoughts ; and, when you part from them, you find they have said out to you nothing of their own. They have paid you the ill-compliment of seeming to think that you were not to be trusted with their thoughts. Then there is the rash talker, often very witty and very brilliant ; but those who sit round him, especially his host, are a little afraid each moment of what he will say next, and of whether it will not be something offensive to somebody. I remember an apprehensive host describing to me once the escapades of such a man in a mixed company, and ending by saying, "I thought all the time how I should like to leave them all there, and get at once into a cold bath in my own room." Lastly, I must notice the self-contained talker, whose talk is monologue—not that he necessarily usurps the conversation—but that he does not call any one else out, as it were, or make answer to any one. He merely imparts fragments of his own mind, but has no notion of the art of weaving them into conversation ; and



so a texture is produced consisting of threads running in one direction only. He makes speeches; he does not enter into a debate.

I think I have shown from the above how difficult it is for a man to be, intellectually speaking, a pleasant companion. But so greatly more effective in this matter are the moral than the intellectual qualities, that a man shall have any one of these faults, or all of them combined that will admit of combination, and yet be a pleasant and welcome companion, if he be but a genial and good fellow.

An Eastern Monarch (I think it was Tippoo Saib), after stating succinctly in his letters what he had to say, used to conclude with the abrupt expression, "What need I say more?" So I, too, having shown you that pleasantness proceeds from good qualities, that it is rare, that it is a worthy object of ambition, beg you all for the future to study to be pleasant. What need I say more?

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I will reserve for a new chapter the conversation that took place after I had read the foregoing essay.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## CONVERSATION UPON PLEASANTNESS.

*Ellesmere.* This essay of Dunsford's is not a bad essay, though somewhat sermonesque. I have, however, a hundred objections to make. I will begin, though, by approval, as that makes one's objections go down better. What Dunsford said about the rarity of pleasant men is true. Indeed I scarcely know any very pleasant man but myself.

*Dunsford.* Well, I am glad that you know one.

*Mildred.* To whom is this one pleasant?

*Ellesmere.* To himself: and that is a great deal more than can be said of most men. But, seriously speaking, of course I know that I do not come within the pale of Dunsford's pleasant people. I am a little too sharp, and too fond of speaking out my mind, for that. I am out of the question. But now, let us look at the rest. Milverton might be pleasant, and indeed can be so when he chooses, but he is too much absorbed in his plans and projects to be what I call a pleasant person. Half the time that he is talking to you, you see that he is thinking of something else. How can a man be pleasant who is thinking about the quantity of bullion in the Bank; which, in our morning's walk to-day, he confided to me he had been watching with anxiety for the last three years? or how can a man be agreeable whose whole soul is generally given to some of the vexed questions of the day? The thing which prevents Milverton from being in the least degree pleasant at the present moment is the question of "the equalisation of

rates." If he could settle that question in his own mind to his own satisfaction, he would be a much more agreeable companion—at least for a day or two, until he had taken up something else to torment himself about. I think we have disposed of Milverton ; and, in disposing of him, we see that to be thoroughly pleasant a man should have somewhat of a disengaged mind. This was not mentioned by Dunsford, and it is one of my hundred objections to his essay.

Then there is Dunsford himself, and there is Mr. Midhurst : they might be pleasant people, but——

*Mr. Midhurst.* Pray do not stop from any motives of delicacy.

*Dunsford.* Oh no, let us hear the worst.

*Ellesmere.* But, to tell the truth, they have not animal spirits enough to be thoroughly pleasant people—another omission of Dunsford's, and another objection of mine to his essay.

Then there is Miss Vernon : she is decidedly too satirical to be pleasant. Then there is Miss Blanche : she is too quiet to be pleasant.

Then there is Walter. It would be beyond measure ridiculous to say of any boy that he is pleasant. The restlessness of a boy is destructive to all pleasantness.

[I do not see, Walter, that you have disproved my assertion by knocking my hat over my eyes.]

No : Walter is decidedly unpleasant ; as all boys are from ten to thirty-three, at which time they begin to mellow into manhood.

Then we come to Fixer. I have the greatest respect for that dog, but I cannot conscientiously say that he is pleasant. I am sure other dogs do not think him so : the look of him is sufficient to take away his claim to be considered a pleasant animal.

I have now gone through the whole company, and it does

not appear that there is one pleasant creature amongst us. In fact Dunsford's pleasant person is a chimera, and exists only in Dunsford's mind.

*Miss Vernon.* Well, but there are unpleasant people.

*Milverton.* And there must be a positive corresponding to that negative.

*Ellesmere.* Not necessarily : the positive in this case is an imaginary being.

As to what Dunsford said about women being pleasanter than men, it is sheer flattery. They have less imagination and less tolerance than men ; and how they are to be more pleasant in society I cannot conceive.

*Miss Vernon.* We may have less imagination and less tolerance, but who is it that say the ill-natured and unpleasant things in the world? Men. Not knowing, however, so much as men, we are not able to lead the conversation as we please ; and if conversation is often unkind and disagreeable, the fault must be laid to men.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Miss Vernon is quite right.

*Ellesmere.* I cannot attempt to contend with her, and so I will return to the discussion of the essay.

As everybody pleased himself and herself by making comments upon my style when I wrote an essay, I shall not omit the opportunity of saying what I think of Dunsford's. The drollest thing about it was, his endeavouring to end his essay in such a way as not to remind us of the ending of a sermon. He fancied that I should have some impertinent remark to make if he did end it so ; and therefore he rushed into an unaccustomed playfulness. As the all-accomplished Master of Trinity once said, he "reserved a trot for the avenue." Then, you know, between ourselves (here he lowered his voice a little), Dunsford is somewhat of a pedant ; and, therefore, I think he may use such words as "exigence" and "function" not unbecomingly. But we could not do so. That word "function" I have

been longing to use all my life, in the sense in which he used it, but I was afraid it would not be intelligible to a British jury.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Receptivity, too, is a curious word.

*Milverton.* A very good word! We all know well what Dunsford means by it. Now Blanche is receptive—takes in all you say, is not inclined to battle with it, at once gives it a hearty welcome. Ellesmere, on the other hand, is not receptive.

*Ellesmere.* No: or a precious quantity of nonsense his mind would be full of by this time. But to return to the essay. Far the shrewdest part of it was where Dunsford pointed out the numerous ways in which men fail (intellectually speaking) to be pleasant companions. We all came in, I suspect, for a little share of censure there. For my own part, I think I dislike the largely-questioning individual the most. There was a man in company with Milverton and me not long ago, who contrived to ask the four following questions in about thirteen minutes. I timed him. The questions were, "Do you think after all that the battle of Lepanto was one of the decisive battles of the world?" "Are you prepared to say that a conjoint standard of gold and silver is the best basis for our currency?" "What do you suppose to be the real revenue of Russia at the present moment?" "What are the grounds for maintaining that the aboriginal languages of America have any affinity to the Indo-Germanic tribe of languages?"

These pleasant little questions were chiefly addressed to Milverton. I was supposed to be too ignorant to know anything about them; and never did I rejoice more in the safe and comfortable shelter of a reputation for ignorance. I observed that Milverton always contrived to answer by reference. The anxious inquirer might turn to Haxthausen; might study Bopp, Tschudi, Trübner, and other learned Germans, if he were so minded; might recreate himself

with Mr. Horner's Bullion report ; or might read Professor Creasy's *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*. But Milverton said nothing of his own.

*Milverton*. Well, I assure you, that if I knew anything upon such subjects worth saying, it would not be from caution that I should not say it ; but one has not one's opinions ready at a moment's notice ; and I have the greatest dislike to talking vaguely and in a hap-hazard manner about great subjects. It seems to me a sort of dishonour to the subjects. Added to which, opinions are with me most valuable things. I arrive at very few of them ; and am not more prone to talk about them than about my affections. I mean, of course, when the opinions are about such large matters as those above stated ; for I agree with Dunsford that there is an over caution in conversation which is very chilling and almost unfair to the people you converse with.

*Ellesmere*. Yes : I have often observed that diplomatists, fox-hunters, and men who are not unlikely to be made bishops, are very cautious in the expression of their thoughts on any difficult subject.

But now, Milverton, have you anything further to say about the essay ? for, if not, I shall bring forward another objection.

*Milverton*. Yes : I have something to say, but it is not in the way of objection. I think that Dunsford has not exaggerated the merits of pleasantness, and I will tell you why. Consider the crowds that are passing in the daytime through the dense thoroughfares of some mighty capital. What a bustle it is, what movement, what ebbs and flows of men and horses, and, as the French call it, *roulage* (whatever goes on wheels) of all kinds ! It seems very grand ; but how trivial for the most part are the errands upon which all this flood of people is bent. To buy, to sell, to chaffer, to convey, to gossip, to make inquiries, and to

answer them, constitute a large part of what the crowd is out of doors to do.

I am not sure that I have made you understand fully what I mean. Men are not always rushing about in war chariots just ready to begin some mighty battle—or arranging some great political movement which is to produce a signal change in nations—or meditating some singular experiment which is to give a new insight into the material world. The meeting with a little more or a little less of pleasantness might not affect persons engaged in such great concerns. But the crowd are necessarily occupied in small affairs, wherein the modes, the manners, and the ways of acting are almost as important as the actions themselves.

Well now, the moral that I draw from this is, what a good thing it is to be pleasant, for pleasantness does in no slight degree smooth every one of those thousands of small transactions which that busy crowd has to get through in the course of the day. An unpleasant man is a centre of vexation from which annoyances travel to distant quarters. Every one who has to do with him is likely to have his temper a little ruffled by this converse; and, if the unpleasant man be in authority, however brief and small, he can contrive to send home every day a great many persons whose tempers are not by any means the better for having seen him.

*Dunsford.* This is very true, and it throws a new light on my essay; for, to tell the truth, I was mainly thinking of pleasantness in society and not in business.

*Ellesmere.* There is one point that struck me in the course of the essay, which indeed I have often noticed before. It is this. Dunsford made imagination enter largely into the composition of pleasantness. I have also observed that Milverton introduces imagination into all virtues. Now surely unimaginative people may be very good people.

*Milverton.* In a limited way: but for all the higher forms

of character you will find, I think, that imagination is necessary.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Imagination, you know, is a great mental power. It is sometimes used for good, sometimes for evil. It is often a considerable mischief to its possessor ; but I must say that upon the whole I think it especially aids goodness, for it must tend to take a man a little out of egotism and selfishness ; and I quite agree with Mr. Dunsford that it does enter into the composition of every man who is remarkable for pleasantness. Of course there may be a good-nature and gentleness which can show forth themselves without its aid ; but it will even make a man pleasant, who might otherwise be very disagreeable, by enabling him on all occasions to see what is to be said and thought for others. It corrects harshness of judgment and cruelty of all kinds. I cannot imagine a cruel man imaginative ; and I suspect that there is a certain stupidity closely connected with all prolonged severity of word, or thought, or action.

*Milverton.* The reason of reasons for cultivating pleasantness, as it seems to me, is that it makes life go happily in the small circle in which we live. Now, people talk of fame. What a slight thing it is in the way of joy or satisfaction, and often how mischievous ! It exposes a man to a thousand nuisances and vexations while he is alive ; and what good can it be to him when he is dead ?

*Dunsford.* The magnitude of the universe, only fully appreciated by the moderns, ought to have greatly checked aspirations after fame ; and I should not wonder if it really has had some effect in so doing.

*Milverton.* But, look at the present fame. The chief good of it is entirely reflex, to my thinking ; and it is useful only as it serves to counteract the effect of familiarity in the household circle. A pleasant man can afford to do without it. Supposing Dunsford now were to gain great fame by



his essay, and to become a noted man in America : what good would it do him ? The Americans would think that they had shown quite enough favour to him in having read the essay. Indeed, they would fancy, as all readers do, that the obligation is on their side. If he should become a popular author over there, do you think they will ever send him one of those canvas-back ducks which Ellesmere and Mr. Midhurst are always talking about ? Not they. But the whole of Dunsford's parish would go out to shoot a canvas-back duck, if they thought his reverence longed for one, and there was a single specimen of that variety to be found in Hampshire. To be beloved in one's parish is an object worth attaining, and that falls to the lot of pleasant people.

*Ellesmere.* The part of the essay that I liked best was what Dunsford said about exigent people. It is particularly true as regards friendship. It is dreadful to attempt keeping up friendship where one has for ever to be offering explanations.

*Milverton.* Yes, without faith, life would be spent in making explanations. It has been observed that almost all letters between friends, unless their friendship is of a very high order, commence with an excuse for not having written before.

There are, however, some beautiful natures that remain exactly the same towards you ; and they neither make nor require excuses. You do not see these people for years ; and they take you up precisely where they left you.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I must confess I did not at all like some depreciatory words which Mr. Dunsford used in reference to tact. True tact seems to me to comprise a great deal of Christianity, and I do not see why the word "worldliness" should have been brought in as Mr. Dunsford brought it. I should think that "worldly tact" would come under the head of that falseness which Mr. Dunsford declared was

never pleasant. By the way, I think he might have said something against obsequiousness. That never pleases, I believe, for long ; I always shudder at it ; and cannot help fancying, perhaps unjustly, that the obsequious man would be tyrannical, if his position were altered.

*Milverton.* There is one thing I must protest against, and that is, that falseness should be attributed to certain persons who are merely more obliging than other men. I have often observed that the world sets down as false, and characterises by that very ugly word "humbug," some man who from softness, or excessive generosity of nature, or proneness to sympathise, is apt to promise and encourage largely — who, however, makes great efforts to fulfil his promises. I cannot explain myself better than by using figures. There shall be a man who promises sixteen things to sixteen different people, and makes a great effort to perform eleven of his promises. The five disappointed persons raise a huge clamour. There shall be another man, who not caring much for other people, and being skilled in the difficult art of saying "No" at the right time and distinctly, holds out hopes to two people only. He gratifies one of them, and there is one malcontent left. But in the other case there were five ; and, besides, the eleven gratified people were not sufficiently gratified, and are a little prone to join with the five malcontents in decrying their benefactor. I have seen this in political life.

*Mr. Midhurst.* And so have I.

*Miss Vernon.* The part of the essay that I liked best was where my uncle Dunsford spoke against the habit of condemnation, and said that the pleasant person always went to the more generous extreme.

*Ellesmere.* Yes, Miss Vernon : satirical people seem to me to be nearly always in the wrong.

*Milverton.* I think that seriously of satire, which Ellesmere says satirically. Satire (as it is generally exercised)

seems to me to be a one-sided thing, to show such poverty of fancy in attributing one class of motives only, and that a bad one, to conduct which, if we could see all its causes, would be too complex even for the most accomplished metaphysician to describe, although he should have the whole map of motives laid out clearly before him. By the way, it would be like a small, crowded map of a large country, in which the names of rivers, provinces, and cities are huddled together in absolute confusion.

I have often thought how wrong satirists may be when, in real life, or in fiction, they are attacking ostentation, or what they suppose to be ostentation—especially in hospitality. What they observe may depend, for instance, mainly upon temperament. Now, if I were a rich man, I should have my house always full: I should entertain the whole county if I could. I am fond of seeing people about me. Well then, unless I were to be very much altered by riches, I should still take a keen interest in politics. "See," would the satirical bystander exclaim, "how that man Milverton courts the county: he has an eye to Walter's representing the northern division." Now Walter and the northern division would be as far from my mind as it is possible to be.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I, too, like to have a great many people about me. The buzz of happy, or at least noisy people about one soothes melancholy, and enables one to be much alone without being lonely.

*Ellesmere.* Depend upon it the satirist could find out a very bad motive for this. I think I see one. A man who loves a good dinner is often fond of having other people about him who love good dinners too. He is ashamed to sit down to a haunch of venison by himself.

*Milverton.* The most jovial thing I know of is to give a great party to the poor—to see the way in which they do enjoy it, coming at the earliest moment and going away at

the latest, eating nobly and disporting themselves without reserve—after a cricket-match or something of that kind.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, sir, I see you are fond of popularity-hunting.

*Milverton.* I am now going to follow on cousin Mildred's side. She liked that part of Dunsford's essay which made the pleasant person not fond of condemnation. I go farther, and think a pleasant person is seldom one who bores much into character, and is always commenting upon it. The other day I was reading something about Charles the First ; and it suddenly occurred to me, that after all I had read at various times of my life upon that king's character, I did not really know much about him. Now, there is a man who has been as much pried into as any human being, yet probably we have not got half-way down into his character. So much for the value of our comments !

To go back, however, to Dunsford's pleasant person, I think he should be one who takes people as he finds them, and is not inclined to be inquisitive. I believe that he will not, on this account, be a bit less wrong than very shrewd searching people often are. His may be a shallow view ; but theirs are often only deeply erroneous ; and there is so little time in the world for a sound investigation into character or conduct that we had better for the most part leave it alone.

*Ellesmere.* I declare this is the best conversation we ever had, at least to my mind, because it has kept most closely to the subject under discussion.

I have now another considerable objection to make to a statement in the essay. Dunsford represented his pleasant man as a sort of phoenix. That is the way with most writers. What they are writing about is the most important thing in the world ; and, if they draw any character, it is made out to be the rarest possible. Milverton has an ideal man of business, Dunsford an ideal pleasant person :

and, if you were to listen to them, you might believe that there are only one or two persons in the world whose characters would fulfil the conditions they require. How differently did I deal with my subject ! My man, who was to get on in the world, was a common-place character.

*Dunsford.* Of all the inconstant men I ever met, Ellesmere is the most inconstant. He began by praising that part of my essay where I spoke of the rarity of pleasantness. I believed in what he said ; but I suppose it was meant to be ironical.

*Milverton.* It is a fault certainly to which writers are liable, this habit of exaggerating the claims of their subject. There are plenty of pleasant people, and some few good men of business. But I will tell you what is a rare character in the world,—as even Ellesmere, I think, will admit—a man of true moral courage. If I were asked what has astonished me most in my converse in the world, what has disappointed most the large expectations of boyhood, it has been to find that there are so few courageous people.

*Ellesmere.* Yes : they are rare birds. If you were to write an essay upon courage, I would allow you to make your courageous man somewhat of a natural curiosity. Almost everybody is bent double by conformity. Very few, mentally speaking, dare to stand upright.

*Mr. Midhurst.* We all like to think in mobs, write in mobs, and act in mobs.

*Milverton.* I have always told you that eccentric people should be greatly encouraged, and I am glad to see that I am fortified by the weighty opinion of Mr. John Stuart Mill. The highest use, perhaps, of men of letters is that they are more eccentric, and more daring, in talk at least, than other men.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, but these men of letters may combine to enslave us too. I always dread the increasing influence of

the press, lest it should form and fashion us into a stupid unanimity of thinking ; and, for my part, I would confine the newspapers, if I could, to one leading article, one that is anonymous at least, lest we should be oppressed by leading articles.

*Milverton.* I would not do so on that account, because the multitude of leading articles gives a chance of more dissimilarity of opinion ; but I would do so, if I thought it would prevent them from entering into private matters. The press is so well conducted now, there is so little scurrility, that its influence is not exceedingly feared by the general reader, and of course, until he comes to suffer himself on some occasion, he does not perceive the danger of its interfering too much with private and ordinary life.

But to return to what I was first saying, is not courage rare? I confess I cannot help having some liking for Laud and Strafford, because they were disposed to be "thorough" in all their proceedings. Now-a-days, statesmen, divines, learned men, and especially those who delight to consider themselves practical men of the world, are seldom or ever disposed to carry out their principles to their legitimate extent. I should like a statesman to prepare his measures carefully, and then to say he would abide by them. "You shall pass this bill, or you shall not have me as a public servant." That is what he should say ; not of course upon every occasion, but upon the great occasions. Instead of that, at present a bill is thrown before the house as the *curée* to the hounds ; and it is torn to pieces by everybody because the author of the bill will generally allow it to be so.

*Ellesmere.* I am glad you admitted just now that learned men are not more courageous than the rest of mankind. They, too, seldom follow out their conclusions, and are apt to speak in innuendos and dark sayings.

However, we have now begun to wander from the subject of our essay, and so I vote that we conclude. Besides it is

time for dinner. You must admit, by the way, that it is an act of considerable courage to undertake a German dinner. You will see that Mr. Midhurst, though diplomatists are generally said to be a timid race, will undertake this achievement with all the courage of a young officer about to lead a forlorn hope.

The conversation ended here, and I must admit that my essay received a much more favourable treatment than I had expected.

## CHAPTER XV.

## LOVERS' QUARRELS.

I MUST tell now how my lovers are going on. I was diverted from that subject by the long essay and conversation "On the Miseries of Human Life," which I am glad that we have got well rid of. My thoughts, however, had not been far from these lovers—I mean Ellesmere and Mildred; for the other two were not worth thinking about, as there was no difficulty with them. I am not like Milverton, who, if the world go well—the distant world—is comparatively comforted even if things about him should go ill. More womanlike, I care exceedingly for those who are near and dear to me; and their troubles are apt to occupy my mind, sometimes to the exclusion of the affairs of all the rest of the world. I had, therefore, been very miserable about Ellesmere and Mildred, who seemed to have become more cold to each other than they were at the beginning of the journey. Ellesmere's character is to my mind a very beautiful one. There is a certain greatness about him. I always say of him that if he had been born a savage, he would have been a leader among savages. This is a curious way of testing a man; but it is often judicious to strip a man in



your fancy of all his trappings of birth, rank, and education, and to see what he would then be. Now, under any circumstances, Ellesmere would not be small. He does not quite receive justice in my account of these conversations. He never oppresses the weak. If there were a stupid man amongst us, or what the Germans call a Philister, Ellesmere would be the last person to oppress that man, intellectually speaking, or to make a butt of him. He is almost insolent sometimes, as we have seen, to men like Mr. Midhurst and Milverton. But then they can take good care of themselves: and Ellesmere's insolence has always such a vein of playfulness in it, that such men are sure to take his provocations in good part.

Then he is very affectionate, though he does all he can to conceal this. He has not, however, been fortunate hitherto in loving. Perhaps women in general do not quite understand such a man, and their sensitiveness is shocked by his brusqueness. Still I thought that a girl like Mildred Vernon might see farther into the character than most women would; might begin by tolerating; go on by appreciating; and end in loving a man who, whatever his defects, has certainly some greatness about him. I had no fear of the result if she were to love him. The haughty Mildred, once broken in by love, would be very governable. The difficult horse to manage in the long run is one that has "no mouth." This is a strange metaphor from an elderly parson like me; but then I live much among country gentlemen and sporting farmers, whose talk sometimes goes to other subjects besides dogs

and horses, but not often. I am, therefore, well up in equine metaphors.

Many times I thought of meddling in this matter, for I think I understand more about Ellesmere than I did. A great part of what, if he were a child, we should call fractiousness, that he has shown of late, arises from love. Different from most men, instead of seeking to be, or rather to seem to be, the ideal person whom the mistress of his affections would be most inclined to admire and to love, he has evidently resolved to be loved for himself alone (if I may make the distinction between a man's self and his opinions and sentiments), and in spite of all her natural predilections I thought I would tell Mildred this, and explain Ellesmere to her ; but then I restrained myself, for you often harden a person in opposition, unless you can bring in your views and arguments exactly at the right time.

Nothing could well be more offensive to the somewhat high-flown and romantic Mildred than the low, sordid, and cynical views which Ellesmere brought forward in the essay he gave us about the arts of advancement in life. Not one offensive word, not one disagreeable thought would he have modified, I know, to please her. It was a dangerous game for a lover to play, but it was eminently characteristic of the man, and so far thoroughly sincere.

After that essay and conversation we had a walk. Ellesmere and Mildred walked together. Blanche and Milverton did the same. Mr. Midhurst preferred his

own society ; and I took care of Walter, for which good action (N.B. Ellesmere is right in saying that I do not much like boys) the rest of the company ought to have been exceedingly obliged to me.

I heard some time afterwards what was the nature of the conversation between Mildred and Ellesmere, of which the following is, I believe, a pretty accurate version.

*Ellesmere.* And so, Miss Mildred, you are not oppressed by a suffocating sense of admiration after hearing my essay. If it had been the discourse of a popular preacher, full of all manner of unrealisable hopes, conveyed in stilted language, there would then have been the choking sensation which I am sorry to see there was not to be noticed in you while listening to my lay sermon ; then, talk with Blanche at night about the delightful preacher and his beautiful language ; then a pair of worked slippers, and who knows what besides ? But plain John Ellesmere's truths are so unpleasant, and the man himself is so odious——

*Mildred.* We need not talk about the man. The half-truths he utters are certainly very base.

*Ellesmere.* I have the honour of being acquainted with one of the greatest statesmen of the present age ; and he has said to me, perhaps thinking that I should be sure to sympathise with him, that the men who hope little are the men who go on working. The great hopers, the exalted spirits, as you would call them, the men for whom slippers are worked, even if they are sincere, soon become disgusted, and end by being really cynical. Depend upon it, as it is best to begin matrimony with a little aversion (Don't you think so ? I alluded to that in the essay), so it is well to begin life with a little distrustfulness, or if you please to call it so, a little cynicism.

*Mildred.* Is my cousin cynical?

*Ellesmere.* Milverton is a very peculiar man. If you, or I, or ninety-nine persons in a hundred, were to fall into the fits of depression under which he occasionally labours, we should never rise to the surface of hope again. I joke about his being like the bull-dog, Fixer; but it is exactly true. Indeed he is a bull-dog in another state of development. I have known him from a boy, and I have observed that he never could pass a bull-dog without commenting upon it. He felt that he must not pass a poor relation without some notice. "Look at that creature," he would say, "that calumniated animal. Most people would call it fierce and sullen: it is merely resolute, and has all the melancholy that attends any animal of great resolve." I am not a bull-dog.

*Mildred.* Certainly not a spaniel.

*Ellesmere.* But still I am a base, low-bred cur?

*Mildred.* Not exactly that. The dog that has seen a good deal of the worst part of the world, and supposes all the rest to be like it, whatever that dog's name may be, is more like—not you, Sir John, but the writer of that essay.

There was a long pause in the conversation, after which Ellesmere remarked,

"That seems a somewhat affectionate couple on before us. How one knows, by the way, when people are walking before one, whether they are lovers or married people. I wonder what they are talking about. What an awkward thing it must be for a man to make an offer to a woman! I wonder whether it would be better to do it in writing. Ministers always beg deputations to leave their suggestions in writing, when they will be 'duly considered by Her Majesty's government.' Which way do you think would be the best, Miss Mildred?"

*Mildred.* Really, Sir John, it is not a subject that has engaged my attention.

*Ellesmere.* Then you have never cared so much about anybody as to think upon such a trivial matter as his making an offer to you.

*Mildred.* My cousin and Blanche seem to have found a very beautiful seat up there. Shall we join them?

And so this awkward conversation ended; and Ellesmere was for the next day or two more fractious and contradictory than he had been before.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## ROWING DOWN THE RIVER MOSELLE.

AFTER the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Mildred and Ellesmere were more at variance than ever. He felt that he had been almost rejected ; and she thought that he had been rude and somewhat impertinent, yet blamed herself for not having behaved more kindly. The whole affair might have been broken off but for the accident of our having Fixer with us, who, as the sequel will show, proved a good genius to Ellesmere.

We had finished our visit to Trèves, and had hired a boat to go down the river to Berncastle, which excursion proved one of the most pleasant and felicitous of our lives. We began joking Milverton about his affection for the two things in natural scenery which he has often told us he most delights in—a wood and a river. He justified his predilection in the following manner.

*Milverton.* Yes ; lakes are very well, but there is something to me meaningless and insipid about them. They consist of the same water, or we fancy that they do ; whereas the changefulness of a river is one of its chief charms. On a lake you go from one place to another, whereas on a river you float past tower and hamlet, citadel and town ; and I

don't know how it is, but it seems to me more like life. Now the sea is almost too big a thing to be fond of. I suspect that people soon become tired of the sea, only they do not tell you so. It stares at you. You seem to see too much of it at once. It is connected with unpleasant associations. It has very seldom weedy margins such as we are passing, which make such good foregrounds to pictures. Altogether there is a great deal to be said against it; and it absolutely requires vessels to be upon it in order to be otherwise than a melancholy flat-faced thing. A wood is full of peace: a river of joy.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I have always observed that in a wood it is more difficult to believe the doctrine that the greater part of the human race will be lost eternally.

*Ellesmere.* Yes: but one still feels assured that all actors, artists, authors, diplomatists will be. One must draw a line somewhere, as the barber——

*Dunsford* (anxious to change the conversation). These likings and dislikings of natural scenery are matters of temperament and of early association.

*Mildred.* Sir Walter Scott says somewhere, that the sight of a mill always made him melancholy, whereas to most people I suppose it is the pleasantest and gayest thing imaginable.

*Milverton.* I am pleased to hear Dunsford make much of temperament. I have often thought that perhaps the most delicate thing a man has to manage in the course of his life is his habit of hoping: to encourage just enough hope to carry him pleasantly forwards, and yet not to indulge in rushes of hope which are perfectly sure to hurry him into the still waters of despondency. At this moment we are going down a stream of just the right force. Well, after all, management has not much to do with the regulation of this force (I am speaking of the mental force of hoping); but temperament, which is a sort of atmosphere

to the solid groundwork of character, and which seems to settle more about a man's hopes and fears, and about his conduct generally, than most people would allow.

*Dunsford.* Yes: I have often thought it remarkable that men, in their comments on each other, take so little account of temperament. They say, he did this, or that, because he was a bad man; or, he was a good fellow, and forgave me soon.

*Ellesmere.* Or they plunge at once into some metaphorical statement, such as,—“He is a dirty little rascal, and reviewed my book most spitefully.” Now, probably, he is not dirty and he is not little: or they say,—Dunsford at least does—“That man is a cynical vagabond; and when he was not yawning, he was smiling, at my sermon.” Now the man is not a vagabond, but a steady parishioner.

*Dunsford.* I accept your instances, Ellesmere, though they are chosen spitefully enough. In whatever way, however, the abuse is put, you agree with me that they say nothing about the man's temperament.

*Milverton.* This is grand, I think——

*Ellesmere.* Oh, of course; Milverton always finds out something which is very grand and very noble and very peculiar about every mean little transaction; and foolish women [here disdainful looks were interchanged between Mildred and Ellesmere] think that every deep-sounding subtlety must be true.

*Milverton.* How cross you are, Ellesmere! I was merely going to say that this neglect of temperament is grand, as it shows that all men think there is something deeper than temperament, which might indeed control temperament, (though it seldom does so), which is the essential solid thing that character is inscribed upon. And there they are surely right; only the effects of temperament should by no means be ignored.

*Ellesmere.* There comes the judicial summing up; and I



can see that the jury, especially the feminine part of it, is inclined to go in whatever direction his Lordship nods his sapient head. Now I could account for the phenomenon in quite a different way. Men, when they speak of one another, mostly speak ill-naturedly. They hit as hard as they can, and they pronounce against a man's whole nature instead of his temperament, because talking about his temperament would seem like furnishing an excuse for the man's evil doings. That's my solution of the difficulty, but of course it's a low one.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Let us go back to what we were first talking of—natural scenery. How small most men are, in that they cannot like all things as they ought to be liked; and that to manifest their likings they generally disparage something else. I like a huge mountain, and the sea in a rage, when it is by no means “a flat-faced thing;” and if I allowed myself to do so, should be inclined to pooh pooh Milverton's “reedy margins” and little bits of rivers. You see I am not one whit larger-hearted than the people I blame.

*Blanche.* Look what a pretty group that is of peasant women going to market! What charming colours!

*Milverton.* I am sorry to say that we English are obliged to quit our country; if we wish to see any well-dressed people in the lower classes.

*Ellesmere.* The Welsh?

*Milverton.* I admit that the Welsh women look well in their peculiar dress, or at least not ill; but in general throughout England there is an indefinable air of squalidity about the great mass of the people.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Every other person you meet seems to be in second or third-hand clothes.

*Milverton.* I often think it would be desirable to have a good and faithful picture of a large concourse of people in England—really faithful—containing all the squalidity.

What a contrast it would form to the large Venetian pictures of bygone days, where crowds are depicted in some procession of a Doge, or reception of a Saint Ursula.

*Mr. Midhurst.* After all, kings are the worst-dressed people in the world, considering their means and their position. There is a very curious remark of the historian Michelet's, which, indeed, I had often made myself before, only I had not applied it to Russia, as I have never been to that Court in a diplomatic capacity. But I had frequently thought of it when at other Courts. Michelet had mentioned that the Russian peasant learnt in his catechism, that the Emperor is an "emanation from the Deity;" and great, he adds, is the peasant's surprise when he sees this wonderful personage, this "emanation" on whom bishops depend, in the tight uniform of a Russian officer. I recollect Michelet's words: "Grande est la surprise de ce paysan, s'il va à Saint-Petersbourg, ou à Moscou, et qu'il y voie l'empereur. Quoi! c'est-là une émanation! Quoi! ce personnage religieux dont dépendent les évêques est un officier avec l'uniforme serré et la tenue raide de tout autre militaire russe?"<sup>1</sup>

*Ellesmere.* We cannot hope to change the costume of kings; and, moreover, as long as they are devoted to soldiering, let them wear the dress of soldiers, however unregal it may be. But I want to discuss the dress of common people.

If ever there was a thing which required to be chiefly kept in a bandbox, and to be worn by delicate people who never went into a crowd, had no girls or boys to manage at home, and lived in a Peruvian climate, where it rains only twice a year, that thing is a modern bonnet. Can there be any creature who looks so utterly deplorable as a draggle-

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<sup>1</sup> *Légendes démocratiques du Nord.* Par J. MICHELET. 1854, p. 266.

tailed old woman in a bulgy bonnet which has once been fine, which belonged to a lady in the square adjacent to the alley where the old woman displays this cast-off, withered trumpery? A seedy old man in the hat and dress-coat that once were mine is not a gay and pleasant object, but he is far outdone by the old woman. However, as to restoring a national costume, you might as well, to use Canning's phrase, attempt to restore the Heptarchy. I console myself by thinking that our ugly dress is a consequence of our freedom.

*Milverton.* Then it is but another instance that everything is paid for, nothing given, in this world of compromise. It does not, however, appear to me impossible for people to be free, and yet to be well dressed. Moreover, national costumes, I should think, are cheap things.

*Ellesmere.* I suppose it would be considered impertinent if I were to take this opportunity of saying something about the dress of the higher female classes. How immeasurably absurd it is! And, depend upon it, if we knew all that milliners could tell us, we should find how irrational are the demands which their customers make upon them to produce all this ugliness, and how cruel to the poor people are these demands.

But, as my friend Sauerteig says (what a clever thing that is of Carlyle having a Sauerteig or Teufelsdröckh to father unpleasant sayings upon), "Women are great brutes to one another."

*Mildred.* This is polite language, certainly—quite chivalrous.

*Ellesmere.* You know very well that even the best of you would hurry on the making of some birthday dress, regardless of whether or not this Juggernaut of a dress crushed out the lives of nine of the poor wretches employed to make it. Do you suppose we hurry on our tailors in that way?

*Mildred.* What is there to hurry? Nobody knows whether your frightfulness of costume is new or old.

*Ellesmere.* Well, it would be a grand thing if some one woman, on some one occasion, would give up making a grand appearance rather than augment the sum of human suffering by cruel hurry, she being probably to blame for not having made up her mind and given her order about her trumpery in time. But I should like a parliamentary return to be made whether there is one such woman—I mean a woman who had once said to her milliner :—"Don't distress your people; though I should like to have my dress in time." This would not be going very far. She would be but a fraction of the one which I should be looking out for to be named in my parliamentary return; but you would never amongst you all make up the noble integer.

There is one ironical comfort which I have in this matter of dress—that, as men understand the ins and outs of it so little, they often admire most the dress of those women who dress most poorly; and a woman gets up all this cloud of rubbish about her, merely to become less attractive—which I suppose is not her chief aim.

*Milverton.* You are a great deal too hard upon women, Ellesmere; but indeed you are not in one of your sweetest moods to-day. I must own, however, that I suspect you are not far wrong in intimating that there is sometimes a good deal of cruel hurry applied to milliners.

*Mildred.* Sir John Ellesmere seldom contents himself with intimating. I should rather say insulting than intimating.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Pooh, pooh! Don't be tempestuous, girl. Don't you know that the men who are always attacking women are those who feel most subjugated by them? Sir John is really enslaved by furbelows and flounces, and he struggles to disown the captivation.

*Dunsford.* The similarity of dress in all classes is significant of the equality, in the eye of the law, of all classes.

*Milverton.* I wish this similarity of dress were significant

of more equality ; for, to my mind, the great difficulty in the way of all kinds of improvement consists in the immense inequality of different classes. Now I am not going to propound any socialistic theories. A certain amount of inequality gives animation to the whole body politic ; but still there is an amount of inequality, not exactly of riches, but of thought and culture, that is a hindrance to you whichever way you turn, and which, as it seems to me, statesmen and reformers should endeavour to reduce as much as possible.

*Ellesmere.* Give instances of what you mean. Nothing, my philosophic friend, is clearly understood, while people are talking of abstractions.

*Milverton.* Without pretending that every person in this company is good, and I know one who decidedly is not good, yet we have all attained that degree of moral culture which would prevent our stealing.

*Ellesmere.* I am not sure of that. You often steal my ideas, dress them up in the Milvertonian fashion, and then they are pronounced by this good company to be very worthy ideas, though that is the last epithet that would be applied to them if they were uttered in my fashion, and by me.

*Milverton.* I am content. You may put it that we have arrived at that degree of culture that we shall only steal Ellesmere's ideas. What an inconceivable advantage it would be for the world, if the great mass of it never went farther in the way of robbery than such an innocent appropriation as that. But this you will say is Utopian. Let us take another case. Suppose that the whole of the world were as free from superstition as the average of persons in the enlightened classes are now.

*Ellesmere.* Humph ! That would not be any great amount of freedom.

*Milverton.* Could there be such a thing as a belief in

witchcraft, or credence given to Joe Smith? Again, suppose there were the simplest knowledge with respect to air and water, universal amongst mankind: how easy then, comparatively speaking, would be the work of sanitary reform! but now the difficulties of addressing the world upon any such subject are great, because what is certain and elementary to one class, is far advanced, hard to understand, and seemingly problematical, when addressed to another.

Again, take a physical instance—the difference in different classes as regards cleanliness is so great as to prove a most effective social hindrance. Again, the modes of living are so widely, so profoundly dissimilar, that the upper classes will always make frantic efforts to avoid for themselves and their children the dire squalidity that they perceive amongst the lowest classes. Hence a wild love of riches, which is the child of fear, and quite to be distinguished from the mere desire of hoarding. Of course great differences in all the above respects must exist; but I merely wish to point out that the greatest ends are promoted by diminishing these extreme points of difference. And note this, that the difference of culture is so great even in the same class, that a man cannot address arguments to one set in that class without absolutely shocking another set, or being so far above them as to be unintelligible.

I have turned this thought over in my mind in many ways for many years, and now that I bring it out to you, I daresay that I do not do so well, and that it has rather a hazy appearance, but ponder it yourselves, and I am sure you will make something of it.

*Ellesmere.* Notwithstanding the wonderful charm that there is, according to Milverton, in going down a river, and notwithstanding the immense delight which there should be to any rational mind in our conversation, which I am sure is as varied as the river's banks, Miss Blanche, I see, has

judiciously provided herself with a novel to fill up the dull pauses of the day. It is, I see, one of Tauchnitz's editions. This man is not so great a robber as the rest. He gives you poor devils something, does he not, Dunsford?

*Dunsford.* I believe he does; but my works are not exactly those which are liable to be pirated.

*Ellesmere.* I do not know about that. I will bet that your treatise on the Greek article is fully as amusing as Miss Blanche's novel, and quite as veracious.

*Milverton.* Now that authors have lost splendid patrons, and that it is generally concluded by the world that they can do nothing but write, the question of international copyright becomes a question of life and death for them. I know at this moment an author engaged in an elaborate work that will take the best part of his life to finish it. He is occasionally obliged to leave off, and devote himself to lighter works, because the only book that he can write which is worth anything does not pay its expenses. His greater work is reprinted, as it comes out, in America, and if he received any of the proceeds of the American edition, he would be able to go on gallantly.

*Ellesmere.* Pray do not let us enter upon the calamities of authors, or the night will darken around us before we have made a beginning of the subject. Besides, who asked them to be authors? Is there a glut of sawyers and tinkers in the land?

*Dunsford.* That last is quite a brutal remark, Ellesmere.

*Ellesmere.* It may be so; but there is some truth in it. Let us go back, however, to Miss Blanche's novel. I wonder that her severe uncle, and her rigid cousin and preceptor have not frightened her out of all novel-reading.

*Milverton.* Now, when did you ever hear me talk in any unjust way against novels?

*Dunsford.* Or me?

*Ellesmere.* Could either of you stand a good examination in your Dickens?

*Milverton.* I could.

*Ellesmere.* Tell us, then, which of all the characters in his novels you like best—of his minor ones I mean, because your answer to that will show whether you really have read any work of his.

*Milverton.* Dick Swiveller. Of all Dickens's minor characters that is my favourite. The character is so pleasantly marked out, without any needless repetition, or labels put on the back of the character to show who is on the scene. A more exquisite bit of humour I do not know in any modern work, than Dick Swiveller's proceedings when he goes down into the kitchen to take a hand of cribbage with the Marchioness.

You would find that I could stand a good examination in modern novels.

*Ellesmere.* Dunsford is silent. He does not even pretend to know anything about novels. But all you pedants secretly dislike fiction: it takes the wind out of your sails.

*Milverton.* I am sure I do not take a pedantic view of fiction. Nothing of course can be more delightful in its way than taking up a pleasant novel, and so dispelling our own troubles, and transferring ourselves into other people's hopes, joys, and sorrows. But still I must own we are all a little too much inclined to give ourselves up to fiction, and I think sometimes that the hours which we devote to the reading of works of fiction might be more advantageously spent in other pursuits. By using the word "advantageously" I have no especial reference to utility, but should be inclined to maintain that more pleasure of a sure, sustained, and prolonged kind, is to be gained by the study of anything that is based upon reality than is to be got out of any works of fiction.

Now an odd instance, an almost childish instance, occurs



to me, to illustrate what I mean. You know my boy Walter's passion for birds' eggs,—not that he is a birds'-nesting boy, but that he wishes to possess a specimen of every kind of bird's egg that exists. I have been quite amused to see how far this small pursuit has led the boy, and what large fields of pleasure and of interest it has brought him into.

*Ellesmere.* Yes: the boy is a capital companion in the country; he knows so much about so many little things that one does not know.

*Milverton.* It follows naturally from this one pursuit. Here is a certain herb or weed. He points it out to you. He tells you that there is a certain insect that will be found here, and a bird that preys upon that insect. He extends his bird's-egg researches into other countries, picks up a little geography, a little civil history, and a great deal of natural history. He was quite ardent the other day in his longings to see a South American forest, into the ornithological wonders of which he had gained an insight by studying sundry books of travel.

In his little way, too, he has gained a knowledge of all the difficulties attendant upon classification. Shall he (Walter) arrange his treasures and catalogue them according to size, or according to country, or according to genera? He varies his classification frequently, and will probably end in some mixed scheme, as we generally do in such matters.

Then there is something new to be found out wherever he goes. You must have observed how, on the first morning after our arrival at each town, he has been off to hunt for zoological museums; and, with the perseverance of a collector, has generally contrived to get into the museum whether it was properly opened or not. Why has he quitted the boat now but to hunt out something or other which is far more interesting to him than our conversation would be?

I could not have chosen a humbler instance, but you see how far this one pursuit, based upon fact, has led the boy, and how much farther it may lead him. It has been worth to him innumerable *Tales of the Genii*.

*Ellesmere*. The tale of the Roc's egg must have had an especial interest for Walter.

*Mr. Midhurst*. The simpleton hero of one novel has no connection with the simpleton hero of another. I am merely alluding to an idea which Milverton started some time ago, when he was talking about history.

Again, fiction is brought to you : knowledge connected with facts you have to pursue.

*Milverton*. Men, of course, are the interesting creatures to mankind, and therefore I was, perhaps, taking an unfavourable case for my argument in comparing any branch of natural history with even the fictions that have reference to mankind.

But let a man once become interested in any great class of human events, and consider what a field of delight it opens for him. He is interested by the disputes of religious sects : he wishes to know what is a High Churchman, what is a Low Churchman, and what a Puritan, or a Presbyterian. He turns to the Reformation ; and, while studying that, cannot help looking at some of the most important struggles which have taken place in our own country. He must get some view of Henry the Eighth's times, of Elizabeth's, of James the First's, of Charles the First's, of Charles the Second's. Then, if he is a curious inquirer, back he goes to the early periods of Church history, becomes conversant with saints and martyrs, popes and emperors, Guelphs and Ghibellines. In short, innumerable books and men, periods of history and distant countries become subjects of great interest to him ; and there are life and growth in his mind. He reads his novel, too, with greater pleasure when he can read it all ; and fiction presents itself to a mind

which has some knowledge of reality to compare the fiction with.

I have not been speaking of a student, of a man who has time for great research, but of a man immersed in busy life, who has yet a few vacant hours to employ in some pursuit foreign from his business.

*Ellesmere.* Do not let us talk any more about history : it is sure to lead to a lecture from Milverton. Let us make him talk about something else, which would especially suit the present hour. I suppose, Milverton, that you are well up in the literature of Rivers, that you know all that has been said by poets or prose writers upon them.

*Milverton.* No, I do not. I can only remember two or three good things that have been said about them.

*Ellesmere.* Well, give us anything that you remember, for I do not find the travelling on a river so lively as not to require something else to amuse one.

*Milverton.* The first thing that I remember is from Lavater. I have often quoted it to you. He compares public opinion to a river. These are his words. "Nothing is more impartial than the streamlike public ; always the same and never the same ; of whom, sooner or later, each misrepresented character obtains justice, and each calumniated honour : he who cannot wait for that is either ignorant of human nature, or feels that he was not made for honour." <sup>1</sup>

*Blanche.* Let us have some poetry about rivers.

*Milverton.* I remember Denham's celebrated lines upon the Thames.

"Thames! the most loved of all the Ocean's sons  
By his old sire, to his embraces runs,  
Hasting to pay his tribute to the sea,  
Like mortal life to meet eternity ;

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<sup>1</sup> *Aphorisms on Man.* No. 450.

Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,  
 Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold :  
 His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,  
 Search not his bottom, but survey his shore,  
 O'er which he kindly spreads his spacious wing,  
 And hatches plenty for th' ensuing spring ;——"

*Ellesmere.* "Hatches plenty," do you say? hatches poison! I wish Denham had had a case this summer before a railway committee of the House of Commons. He would have turned his verses very differently, if he had lived to turn them at all. But proceed.

*Milverton.* I forget the next few lines; but afterwards it goes on so:—

" No unexpected inundations spoil  
 The mower's hopes, nor mock the ploughman's toil ;  
 But godlike his unweary'd bounty flows ;  
 First loves to do, then loves the good he does.  
 Nor are his blessings to his banks confin'd,  
 But free and common as the sea or wind ;  
 When he, to boast or to disperse his stores,  
 Full of the tributes of his grateful shores,  
 Visits the world, and in his flying tow'rs  
 Brings home to us, and makes both Indies ours ;  
 Finds wealth where 'tis, bestows it where it wants,  
 Cities in deserts, woods in cities, plants.  
 So that to us no thing, no place, is strange,  
 While his fair bosom is the world's exchange.  
 O could I flow like thee ! and make thy stream  
 My great example, as it is my theme ;  
 Though deep yet clear, though gentle yet not dull ;  
 Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full."

The lines sound somewhat ironical, do they not, upon the present state of things? Other rivers, however, in England are just as much polluted as the Thames, and it will be hard work for the coming century to recover the purity of our rivers; but it must be done.

*Mr. Midhurst.* It will not cost more than a little war or two; and we must abridge ourselves in those luxuries if we can possibly manage to do so.

*Ellesmere.* Much will depend upon you diplomatists. But, Milverton, have you no more scraps to give us?

*Milverton.* I can give you a bit from Tennyson, about a lazy river.

“ Not wholly in the busy world, not quite  
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.  
News from the humming city comes to it  
In sound of funeral or of marriage bells,  
And sitting muffled in dark leaves, you hear  
The windy clanging of the minster clock;  
Although between it and the garden lies  
A league of grass, wash'd by a slow broad stream,  
That, stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,  
Waves all its lazy lilies, and creeps on,  
Barge laden, to three arches of a bridge  
Crown'd with the minster-towers.”

*Ellesmere.* Now I am going to ask you a question which will be a puzzler, I think. When Dunsford was teaching us anything in mathematics, he used always to push his proposition to some extreme—just like him, always in extremes—and poor wretched X was made into infinity, or nothing, by which means he proved wonderful things. Now, I say, if Milverton loves rivers, he ought to love canals.

*Milverton.* So I do. I was charmed with Holland. I think nothing more beautiful than seeing tall masts amidst the landscape, and brown sails amongst the trees. Then the movement on a canal is more like life than even the movement on a river. You go along with difficulty, in an artificial way that has been cut for you, and you meet with all manner of locks and hindrances, and have tolls and taxes to pay, and do not see too much of the country you pass through (for in life men do not get many bird's-eye

views of the country they are traversing), and you are often enveloped in mist, and after a good deal of labour you find yourself upon the broad ocean ; for the canals lead there too as well as the rivers. I begin to think that poets have neglected canals.

*Mildred.* One poet has not.

“ I never knew myself to sleep o’ horseback,  
And yet I must have slept. The evening’s heat  
Had much oppressed me ; then the tedious tract  
Of naked moorland, and the long flat road  
And slow straight stream, for ever side by side,  
Like poverty and crime—I’m sure I slept.”

The slow straight stream must have been a canal.

*Dunsford.* I suppose that Ellesmere would not bear a Latin quotation, but there are beautiful descriptions of rivers in Quintus Curtius, and one of the Cydnus, I think I could quote.

*Ellesmere.* It must be but one then. I certainly do dislike Latin quotations, for being an educated man, or rather having been an educated man, one is obliged to look as if one understood all the Latin that is quoted, and sometimes one does not—which is awkward.

The fact is, my Latin, having been put away for some years, is a little moth-eaten. But, as I said before, we will endure one Latin quotation, spoken slowly ; and you may explain any hard word—to the girls.

*Dunsford.* “ Cydnus, non spatio aquarum, sed liquore memorabilis : quippe leni tractu e fontibus labens puro solo excipitur : nec torrentes incurrunt, qui placidé manantis alveum turbant. Itaque incorruptus idemque frigidissimus, quippe multa riparum amœnitate inumbratus, ubique fontibus suis similis in mare evadit.”

*Ellesmere.* I think I can make out most of that : it is tolerably easy Latin. The poets always talk of the gliding of rivers. Now it is this gliding I dislike. Very well for

them, but decidedly slow for us when we are upon them. I like the Great Western express train, especially for the last fifty-six miles, from Didcot to London, done in an hour. [How characteristic this speech was of the impatient Ellesmere. He cannot sit quietly in a boat, like any other reasonable being.]

*Milverton.* For me a light carriage and two post-horses is sufficient.

*Ellesmere.* Nobody has written the poetry of posting.

*Milverton.* Nothing used to be more delightful than a long day's posting in the olden time. You could see enough of the country; you could stop to look at anything beautiful (not that one ever did stop); there was a pleasant life and bustle in the constant change of horses and post-boys: and altogether it was a most inspiring transaction. I sympathise with a great traveller in Russia who confessed that the length of the journeys was the main delight to him.

But in those golden days there was no electric telegraph. Once off, you were well off; and nuisances of all kinds were soon left long behind. Now, to be secure, a man must go away in a yacht; and the very name of a yacht is odious to poor creatures like me who suffer from seasickness.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Milverton, I see, would have agreed with Dr. Johnson that there was nothing so delightful as travelling in a post-chaise, with a pretty woman by one's side.

*Milverton.* I decline the pretty woman. The chief merit of a carriage is that you can be alone, and not have to talk.

*Ellesmere.* She might be deaf, or have a singular talent for silence.

*Milverton.* After one has left college, where happily we could "sport" our doors without offence, there is no place for uninterrupted thought like a carriage. There need be no greetings: there is never dullness; and altogether I

believe there have been more successful trains of thought elaborated during this species of locomotion than under any other circumstances.

*Apropos* of carriages, I remember an amusing story of an Italian ecclesiastic. He was in company with some other good people ; they were inveighing against the pomps and riches of this world, and showing the inability of such things to make men happy. He quite chimed in with his companions. "All, all is vanity," he said ; and then he paused for a moment—"except a carriage." Now, he was a very good man, devoted to charitable works in the great town where he lived ; but probably he was a studious sickly man, and had found the immense gain that it was for him in his work to ride sometimes in a carriage. So, when he was denouncing the pomps and vanities of the world, an honest sudden thought compelled him to make this exception. But it has a very droll sound, "all, all is vanity except a carriage."

I quite agree with him ; so when I put down my brougham—that little box upon wheels in which I have done a good deal of work of one kind or another—you will know that it is sheer, undoubted, unmitigated poverty. You will not be taken in by my saying that a carriage is a nuisance : that a horse is always falling ill or getting into some trouble ; that for my part I prefer keeping my carriage in my breeches-pocket, as I have heard a man say, slapping his breeches-pocket significantly. You will know that all these are the excuses one makes for the wickedness of being poor, and which one fondly fancies one's neighbours do not see through. Upon my word, now I come to think of it, the last drive one should take in a carriage which one had had for many years, would be a very pathetic affair ; and one would look at the dear four-wheeled thing, when one got out of it, as a snail must at its shell which it has quitted for ever.



It was just at this point of the conversation that we pulled in nearer to the land, as Walter had made signs that he wished now to get into the boat. It was a weedy rushy part of the river that we entered. Fixer saw a rat or some other creature, which he was wild to get at. Ellesmere excited him to do so, and the dog sprang out of the boat. In a minute or two Fixer became entangled in the weeds, and seemed to be in danger of sinking. Ellesmere, without thinking what he was about, made a hasty effort to save the dog, seized hold of him, but lost his own balance and fell out of the boat. In another moment Mildred gave me the end of her shawl to hold, which she had wound round herself and sprang out too. The sensible diplomatist lost no time in throwing his weighty person to the other side of the boat. The two boatmen did the same. But for this move, the boat would, in all probability, have capsized, and we should have all been lost. Mildred was successful in clutching hold of Ellesmere; and Milverton and I managed to haul them close to the boat and to pull them in. Ellesmere had not relinquished hold of Fixer. All this happened, as such accidents do, in almost less time than it takes to describe them. And now came another dripping creature splashing into the boat; for Master Walter, who can swim like a duck, had plunged in directly he saw the accident, but too late to be of any assistance.

I believe if all my readers were to guess for ten years, not one of them would succeed in guessing what was the

first remark which Ellesmere made when the four dripping creatures had seated themselves a little apart from us, and we were looking at them with the feeling of terror that comes most strongly upon you just after a danger is past. I think, though, if I mistake not, there was a whisper from Ellesmere to Mildred before he spoke aloud. "You know, Walter," he said, "that I returned your knife yesterday evening: it was when your father asked for it to cut his pencil." We all looked at Ellesmere as if he must be bewildered by what he had gone through, hearing him make such an unaccountable remark. But he continued, "You need not therefore have been in such a hurry to save me, Walter." Then turning to us, "Don't you know the story of the American boy (and all boys are alike), how, when he heard his father was drowned, he said, somewhat crossly, as an injured boy, 'And he had my knife, too, in his pocket.' Walter, I suppose, had quite forgotten that I had given him back his knife."

Mr. Midhurst then remarked that he did not wish to make more of his own merits than they deserved; but he believed that his weight had been the means of our being saved. "Ah," replied Ellesmere, "I see the final cause of all those good dinners of which Mr. Midhurst has partaken, upon principle, in all quarters of the globe. If it had not been for the solidity thus obtained, there would have been no more Friends in Council, for you know you would all be as dull as ditch-water without me. By the way, what a silly thing it is that a man who

knows something touching contingent remainders, and who could pick a hole, and that not a small one, in any given marriage settlement, should know no more how to swim, than a bale of goods. But that is just the way with us men ; we omit to learn what is most useful."

We covered them up with all the cloaks and railway-blankets we could muster, and with our own coats, and then made for the nearest town on the banks of the river. I hope it was not indelicate in me to notice, but I saw from a meaning smile on Milverton's face that he noticed too, that Ellesmere took advantage of all these wrappages to sidle up very close to Mildred, to take her hand, which was not withdrawn, and to keep it in his all the time we were in the boat.

And so the quarrel of the lovers ended. A comical thing, life ! Here were two people, who really had a great affection for one another, and they might have separated, and this affection only have become a life-long heartache, if an indiscreet dog had not plunged into the water after a rat or something that looked like one. I should have laughed now at this incident had it come in the third volume of a novel evidently to bring about a desired marriage. But, I believe, in novels it is generally the gentleman who saves the lady ; and that interesting adventure mostly occurs at the end of the first volume. However, the result was so good in this case that I ought to do anything but comment jestingly upon the means which brought that result about. A great weight was taken off my mind when I found that the quarrel was

not merely made up for that day, but that there were explanations and apologies and long talks, ending as such things generally do in such cases. In fine, Sir John Ellesmere was from that day the accepted lover of Mildred Vernon—which fact he announced officially to us in a way peculiar to himself. Two days after the accident had occurred, he suddenly asked us whether we had ever heard of the malediction which the Duke of Buckingham (Charles the Second's Buckingham) had uttered on the dog that bit him? "No." "This is what the Duke said:—'I wish you were married and went to live in the country.' Think of a dog, the most unconjugal of creatures, marrying and going to live in the country! But I am going to be married, too, though we are not going to live in the country, are we, Mildred? We are not quite so simple as that." Mildred blushed, but said nothing; and we all joyfully offered our congratulations.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## ON GOVERNMENT.

WE were at Metz, on our way home. It is a pleasant town, with fine public gardens, and a very ancient cathedral well worth studying.

It happened that there was a great review, or inspection of troops, while we were there ; and wherever we went about the town, nothing was to be seen but mounted officers and orderlies dashing about, and nothing to be heard but the clang of military music. Milverton became very peevish. Had Ellesmere been in such a mood, he would have indulged in many outbreaks of temper ; but Milverton's annoyance was only to be discerned by a few cross and melancholy utterances, and by the way in which he avoided, whenever he could, meeting any of the troops which were marching out to the place of course.

I knew well what was in his mind. He was mourning over this eternal soldiering, and I studied to give him an opportunity of talking about it. This was rather difficult, as we had already had a long essay and conversation upon war. At length I bethought me of bringing up the cognate subject of government, and invited him to have

a discussion upon it. Ellesmere, probably discerning what was my drift, backed my request. Mr. Midhurst is always ready to discuss any subject. We strolled to the extreme end of the public gardens, to that spot where you look over a little river, and where there are fortifications on each side of it. This naturally called forth a splenetic remark from Milverton in the mood he then was. "Look," he said, "at these tons of solid brickwork, what a sacrifice it is of human labour ! I know what you are going to say, that Metz is a frontier fortress, and must be well defended. I admit all that ; but cannot help deploring these so-called necessities. Mr. Disraeli speaks of 'democratic finance,' and there is something in what he means to imply by those words. But think of imperial finance ! Is there no condemnation to be pronounced upon that too ?" Here Mr. Midhurst interrupted him, and the conversation thus proceeded :—

*Mr. Midhurst.* I thought we were to have a discussion upon government, of which these armies are but the mere tools. We all wish, Milverton, to have an extempore essay, or, if you please, a speech, from you on the subject.

*Milverton.* We have discussed this subject of government once before. I have not, however, any recollection, or scarcely any, of what I then said ; and if I repeat myself, you must not blame me for it. The discussion was not of my seeking.

*Ellesmere.* I really think there is nothing more interesting than taking up a topic which we have discussed before, and so discovering what change has gone on in our minds. It is for a similar reason that, when I travel, I like visiting

the same towns over and over again. Do not be afraid, Milverton, of being inconsistent. It is the especial privilege of all politicians ; so talk boldly, and without the fear of Hansard before your eyes. Government is the subject which I know you prefer to all others for discussion.

*Milverton.* I am reassured by what you say, and will make an attempt at once. But do talk seriously, if you can, Ellesmere, about it, as I confess I am a little irritable this morning ; and I hate to see great subjects of this kind treated flippantly, as they often are in the gravest assemblages. Let us show a different spirit.

*Ellesmere.* I will be upon my best behaviour. I will not make more than one joke during the whole conversation, and that shall be a solid joke, merely disguising some wise thought which might be acceptable to this serene company, but which I cannot express in any other way. Now, begin.

MILVERTON.—

WELL, the first thing I have to say is that I believe a great deal can be done by good government. This seems a truism ; but it requires to be stated and re-stated, for I declare there are many intelligent people who seem to believe that nothing more remains to be done by government than just to leave everything alone.

As an illustration of the contrary, I will take an instance which is familiar to all of you, which I have often used before, but which is so apt to the point, that I have no hesitation in repeating it. Consider the formation of railways in our country. It was greatly left alone, as far as government was concerned ; and the mischief that has arisen on that account is almost irreparable. Had Lord Dalhousie's counsels prevailed, the wealth, the well-being,

and the convenience of our countrymen would have profited thereby to an immense extent. The foregoing is comparatively a defunct subject ; but the state of public affairs teems with matters of the deepest public interest, and of great complexity. The world has not become easier to manage than it used to be ; and there are many subjects at the present moment rising into importance which would require all the sagacity that England can produce to settle them in a statesman-like manner. Even in minor affairs, the quantity of intelligence which is required to be at the command of government is more than anybody would believe who had not carefully looked into the subject. There are many Acts of Parliament which are nearly unworkable, and which require a thorough supervision in detail.

Then consider how the work of Parliament is falling behindhand. Every year there are more and more continuation bills, which is merely a fine name for work postponed or shuffled over. I believe that some of the most foreseeing statesmen of our time regard these continuation bills with thorough vexation and dismay.

Then there is finance. I do not know how other people regard this matter ; but my mind is filled with the most painful apprehensions arising from the way in which we are going on about finance. I suppose you know that since the year eighteen hundred and thirty-three, our estimates are immensely increased, in some cases doubled. What is to be the end of all this ? I know what would have been the end already, if we had not



been blessed, of late years, with good harvests and an extraordinary supply of gold.

Financiers had been looking forward to the time when the Long Annuities should fall in, as a halcyon time for them. All that relief has been anticipated. And the worst is, that there is every prospect of a continued increase in our estimates for the purposes of war. I know that Mr. Midhurst will say that this is inevitable, that it has nothing to do with us, and that all Europe must be better governed before we can safely retrench in these respects. I do not quite admit this, though no doubt there is great force in such remarks. One cannot, however, but deplore the sad misapprobation of mankind for conquerors and for ambitious, self-seeking, one-ideaed persons in high power ; and it does seem to me that a good understanding might be established by some great statesman in England between himself and the leading financiers of Europe that should very much cripple the resources of monarchs, when those resources were likely to be applied to the direct purposes of war, or to those menacings of war which are implied in the maintenance of large standing armies. This ground, however, has been gone over before. But admitting that these estimates are not to be diminished, I still maintain that there is large room for financial skill, and that much may be done by it to make the public burdens fall less heavily upon us than they do.

The first and ever-recurring difficulty is to get able men into office, and to give them something like sufficient

power. There should be men in office who love the State as priests love the Church. As it is, their own individualities have become more and more the absorbing subject of interest with most European men. There is this terrible striving to get rich, this anxiety to grasp or maintain a good position; but a hearty, self-denying, almost fanatical love of the commonwealth is confined to few breasts; the prudent selfishness of the day, which I observe delights to make out that Shakespeare feathered his nest well, can hardly conceive the indifference of that great man, Pitt, concerning his private affairs. Of course I do not mean to praise indebtedness in him or in any other man; but I should like to see some of his greatness of spirit. I believe Pitt would have gone readily into gaol, thus atoning as he best could for the confusion of his private affairs, if he could but have left public affairs in the prosperity which he longed to win for them.

Now, as regards the House of Commons, I will not say that it is usurping, but, at any rate, it is absorbing the whole functions of government. How is it doing that work which it arrogates for itself? Will any one contend that it is accomplishing that work in a satisfactory manner. The universal answer will be, "No." This being the state of things, there remain but three courses. Sir Robert Peel's "three courses" come in upon every occasion.

First, you may leave things alone. Amongst a quiet, douce, readily-suffering, largely-enduring people like the

British, much may be left alone. Moreover, when a State has attained a certain amount of force and prosperity such as Great Britain has attained, it takes a long time to break it down. You may heap muddlement upon muddlement ; and, with a free people, though much mischief is done and much good prevented, still they work on steadily, each man in his private capacity doing something to retrieve the effects of bad or of indolent government. No lover of his country, however, would wish for such a state of things to continue indefinitely.

Secondly, the executive government might be greatly strengthened. I have often pointed out to this company, until I am afraid they are tired of hearing it, various ways in which the public offices might be strengthened. In particular, I have shown them how this might be done by the addition of councillors to the various departments—not of a council, which I suspect will never be found to work well, but of individual men of high promise or well-recognised ability, whose business it should be to make themselves well acquainted with the affairs of the department to which they are attached, and to be at the minister's call for any special service connected with his duties. I am not, however, bound to this plan. I merely say that, if public business is for the future to be better conducted than it is now, the public offices must be intellectually strengthened.

Thirdly, we come to the consideration of the House of Commons. In all the Reform Bills that have yet

been shadowed forth, you must admit that there is no sign of any provision being made for the introduction of statesmen. Of course the small boroughs are much talked of as affording this facility. All one can reply to that argument is, that the great landowners and other personages who have the domination in these boroughs, have not of late years shown any desire to bring forward new men of much public utility. Mark, I admit that the kind of man wanted is very rare. There are a number of clever young men who can write good leading articles, and talk well about politics; but there are very few of the type of the late Francis Horner, who are students of public affairs. To acquire the knowledge requisite for the management of any private estate is no light toil. To become acquainted with such an estate as that of Great Britain is a matter of undying labour. There are not many who will undertake it, and they certainly have no reason to expect any remarkable encouragement.

Not much then is apparently to be hoped for from the small boroughs. If they ever fulfilled the function of sending into Parliament singularly capable men, it is a function which has fallen into desuetude with them.

Various ways have been proposed by thoughtful men, of whom I believe Professor Craik was the first, to find out some method of gaining for minorities a true representation. This difficulty has been conquered, both by Professor Craik, and also by Mr. Hare, who has gone further, and has proposed a most remarkable scheme of

representation, deserving large consideration. A single sentence will explain the principle. He proposes not to confine representation to locality, allowing constituents to give their votes to candidates who may not reside in the locality whence the voter derives his right of voting. Amidst the turmoil of politics, these thoughtful propositions are not likely to gain much attention. But if anything could be devised, whether by means of what are rather unfairly called "fancy franchises," or by a certain number of seats being placed at the disposal of government, or by Mr. Hare's more comprehensive plan, whereby men of a peculiar aptitude for public business could be introduced into the House of Commons, it would be a great benefit to the community. Property will take care of itself. Stupidity will always be fairly represented. Prejudice is never silent in any public assembly. Mere numbers always have their weight. But ability is a shy thing, and if we could in any way foster it, we should surely do so. It will only be when some large reform is adopted, involving considerable popular concessions, that some adjunct may be made, without much cavil, which should give an opening for peculiar ability to find its way into the House of Commons.

I pass now to another branch of the subject ; and to my mind it is by far the most important one that I shall have to propose for your consideration. In any discussions upon reform, in any propositions for improving the representative or the executive bodies, how rarely is a thought bestowed upon the colonies ! How rarely it is

recollected that we are a great Empire ! I am persuaded that if we are to maintain this empire, it must be by attaching to us, in some manifest way, the eminent and forcible men of the colonies. I do not care how this is done. At any rate I do not venture to assert dogmatically how it should be done. Whether by attaching them as councillors to a department ; whether by introducing them into the Privy Council ; whether by giving them some opportunities of getting into the House of Commons ; whether by conferring peerages upon them,—it is not for a private person like me to determine. But if we wish to remain a great State, we must be prepared, I think, to give those persons who in distant regions are increasing and enriching our empire, some means of adit to the imperial Executive and the imperial Legislature.

Consider the Roman Empire. See what a great thing it was to be a Roman Citizen. It does not require any peculiar learning to apprehend what was the depth and meaning of that citizenship. The uncultivated reader of the Bible can judge from what he reads of St. Paul in the Acts, as well nearly as many a scholar can, of the pervading weight and power of Roman citizenship. "When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest : for this man is a Roman."

Race is beginning everywhere to be more thought of. It may be wise, or it may not be wise ; but such is the fact. And it seems to me, that it would be one of the greatest efforts of statesmanship to keep that large por-

tion of the Anglo-Saxon race which still remains under the sway of our Sovereign, united to us in the closest bonds.

I was honoured some time ago by a visit from an American, who is admitted to be one of the most eminent persons in the United States. He is a man above all petty prejudices, above any small-hearted jealousy of the parent country. He looked around him, and said that he could perceive no signs of decadence in England. He praised our vigour : he lauded our courage : he had a good word to say for our agriculture, and openly acknowledged that he was astonished at the burly forms, and downright independence of bearing which he saw, for instance, among our farmers. "But," said he, smiling benignantly, "we shall outgrow you ; we must outgrow you." Now, I am not so sure of that. At any rate I believe we can put off this outgrowing for a long time, if we only have the skill and the justness to attach our colonies to us by firm and durable bonds of thorough amity.

Look at Australia. Look at Canada, at South Africa, at the rapidly rising British Columbia : what fellow-citizens we have in these most flourishing regions.

You may tell me that the colonies have legislatures of their own ; but that does not appear to me a sufficient reason for not endeavouring to bring the eminent men of those colonies in closer connection with the Imperial Legislature.

As regards India, the course of legislation of late has

been to thrust men who are well acquainted with India out of the House of Commons. I say, on the contrary, let us have as many of them as we can get there. We have undertaken to govern India: let us gain all the benefit we can from the experience and sagacity of any persons conversant with that vast country. The local interests of England are pretty sure to be well represented. But every facility should be given for the wants, the wishes, and even, it may be, the foolish requirements of our distant colonies and dependencies, being well heard in the Imperial Parliament

Again, it cannot be maintained that the honours and dignities bestowed by the Crown have for many years, I might say for many reigns, been given with that thought for the public service with which they might have been given. As we all know, these honours have been very often made the rewards of mere party services. Now, the bestowal of such honours and dignities upon deserving colonists would, I believe, be found to be one of the surest means of attaching the colonies to the mother country, and of blending these various communities into one harmonious whole.

I pass now to another branch of the subject. Observe how our choice of public servants is fettered in every way, from the highest to the lowest. We place a bar, as regards the age of candidates, at the entrance into public departments, which is often very injudicious. The Church in all times has been wiser than the State in this respect; and many of her greatest men in all nations



have been those who have served in the army or under the State. An historian could crowd the page with names of eminent persons who have entered into the service of the Church after having begun and having prosecuted another career.

But observe in other and more notorious ways how our choice of men to serve the State is fettered. In many high offices, a man has need to be rich. This is a great pity. It results, in some measure, from our luxurious mode of living. There are few Andrew Marvels in these days. Some there are ; but it is very desirable that there should be many more.

Then if a man is to serve in Parliament, he must start with local influence or high connection. Now I do not, for a moment, maintain that this is utterly unreasonable. On the contrary, I believe it gives a certain stability to a country ; but we must also look at the evils of it. There is very difficult work to be done in governing any modern country. Let the world think what it may, there are but few men who are endowed with great aptitude for managing public business or indeed business of any kind. And the whole of my arguments merely tend to this, that every opportunity should be given for the chance even of finding such men.

I cannot better illustrate my meaning than by a quotation from a speech lately delivered<sup>1</sup> by a veteran servant of the public, a most accomplished man, thoroughly well informed on the subject he discusses.

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<sup>1</sup> 1859.

Sir James Stephen, speaking of the Prime Minister, thus defines the limits to his powers of choosing fit subordinates :—

“The leader selected for this duty (nominally by the Queen, really by the high authority I have mentioned) has a very narrow range of choice. He must confine himself to his own parliamentary supporters, and of them he can nominate only such as are rich enough to play the hazardous game of political life, and of them again only such commoners as are sure of their re-election, and of them only such persons as can speak with some measure of propriety and acceptance. Therefore, if he has thirty political offices to give, he has very rarely indeed so many as sixty possible candidates for them. From that contracted circle he has to select some fifteen or sixteen men, each of whom ought to bring, and is supposed to bring, to the department over which he is to preside, a knowledge at once special and profound of all the subjects comprised within its official scope and jurisdiction. For example, the Prime Minister must find one candidate familiar with our whole foreign policy ; a second intimate with all our internal institutions ; a third profound in finance and political economy ; a fourth conversant with all the affairs of our Indian Empire ; a fifth entirely at home with those of our forty colonies ! a sixth, to whom the constitution, wants, and employment of our armies are thoroughly known ; a seventh, whose chosen and successful study has long been naval war and nautical affairs ; an eighth, who is fitted to act the part of an ædile in London, and with whom the science of architecture—Grecian and mediæval—has become a passion ; a ninth, whose knowledge of the poor laws, and of the state of the poor, might rival that of Mr. Chadwick himself ; and a tenth, who, without blushing, could issue instructions to our great benefactor, Rowland Hill, for the better conduct of the affairs of the Post-office.”

I shall not give you now any more of my thoughts upon government. I am ashamed that there has already been so much monologue, while we have been sitting here. There go those odious trumpets again! Those are the chief enemies to good government. But I must not proceed; and so, adopting that easy mode of ending which Dunsford and Tippoo Saib are the authorities for (a curious pair), I shall merely exclaim, "What need I say more?"

*Ellesmere.* Your essay, or speech, or whatever it may be called, Milverton, is full of good suggestions—so good, indeed, that they are not the least likely to be attended to. Now don't be angry, for this is the nearest approach to a joke that I am going to make—and a sad and sorry joke it is. But you must know that any proposition which is far-stretching (I will not say far-reaching, lest it should seem like flattery), and which seeks to be far-sighted, has not much chance of being considered in these days. We are all in a desperate hurry—to look on for a year or two ahead is a very fatiguing, and, as we mostly think, an unnecessary labour.

*Dunsford.* I had hoped that Milverton, when he had got his right man into the right place everywhere, or, at least, one or two men in the right places, would have shown us how they should behave themselves. I have heard him speak of a certain want of communication between men in power and the public, which he maintained to be a great hindrance to the public service. On such occasions I always recollect a saying of Sydney Smith's, which made a great impression upon me—namely, that it was desirable for a good, independent, out-speaking parish priest to be present sometimes in debates on Church matters, which are

now left wholly to my Lords the Bishops. Something of the same kind is, I daresay, often wanted in Parliament for other affairs. Grievances are frequently not well understood on account of the absence of the persons most aggrieved, and of those who could best represent them.

*Ellesmere.* There is one statesman of the present day of whom I always say, that he would have escaped making the blunders that he has made if he had only ridden more in omnibuses. Instead of allowing him to attend a cabinet council in Downing Street, I should often have put him into an omnibus at Tyburn Gate, and taken him to the Bank and back again. Having been exercised in this way twice a day for a fortnight, he would have become so much more knowing in the ways and thoughts of common men, that his administration would have lasted three years longer. I should have expected to have been made Lord Chancellor for this good service to the government.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Great allowances should be made for public men, considering all the worry and turmoil they have to go through.—They have no time to pick up information: they have no time for reading anything that demands a somewhat disengaged mind and consecutive study. As an eminent statesman once said jestingly, "I read only manuscripts," alluding to the number of papers and memorials he had to get through, and the impossibility of looking much at anything but them.

*Miss Vernon.* Sir John's proverb would apply well here, "Nobody knows where the shoe pinches but the wearer;" and I suppose statesmen have not even time to inquire about the pinching of other people's shoes. What does cousin Milverton say to this? Perhaps it is very impertinent in me to offer any remark upon such a grave subject as government.

*Milverton.* No, Mildred, you are quite right: at least such is generally the case. I had once, however, an excel-

lent opportunity of observing the advantage of communication being established between a minister and the public. It was something that occurred within my own experience, and it may appear egotistical to recount it. But the truth is, our own facts, those which we have seen and known for ourselves, are incalculably the most precious and the most useful to us ; and so I will make no further apology for recurring to my own experience.

Several years ago it was proposed that there should be a considerable change in a large branch of our fiscal laws. The minister who was to have charge of the bill, invited rather than deprecated assistance and information from all quarters. He was a man who made good use of his underlings, and who liked to give them something to do which would instruct them. Each day, after he had looked over the letters which related to this subject, he handed them to me, desiring me to make an abstract of them, and when they amounted to a considerable number, to bring him a summary of the abstract.

At first, all was confusion ; but soon the various complaints and suggestions began to fall into their proper places. One person's experience corrected another's. In this way local, or otherwise peculiar influences became appreciable, and could be eliminated. And, at last, it seemed to me, that from this multitude of communications you could discern what were the real grievances under which the Queen's subjects laboured in respect of those laws, how these grievances might be avoided, and at the same time the revenue be rather increased than diminished. No one man's experience could have taught you this ; and a mere consultation with the officers of the department would never have enabled you to frame so good a measure as you could by confronting official knowledge with the experience of the public.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Very true : and in no department would

this communication be more needful than in the Financial department of the State. I declare I lost two whole days this summer in some botheration about the tax on dogs. Now, though you may not think it, I value my days very much (I have not so many left to me that I can afford to waste them), and I confess I was exceedingly cross at this loss of time. I am a loyal subject to the Queen ; I ought to be, having been employed in her service ; but, as regards the dog-tax, I am henceforward a disaffected person. So far I am a rebel. I daresay there are a great many other rebels, whose rebellious tendencies have been provoked by needless (to use a favourite adjective of Milverton's)—by needless worry upon the smallest matters of taxation.

*Ellesmere.* Oh, ho ! I remember, long ago, Mr. Midhurst storming about the assessed taxes. Now, we have got to the root of the matter. Some distant relation of Fixer's will be the cause some day of Midhurst's raising the standard of revolt. "Down with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and untaxed dogs for ever." That will be the war-cry.

But I forget, I must not joke to-day, as Milverton is in the humour of Sir Oliver Roundhead, who never laughed himself, and never permitted any of his family to laugh.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I will tell you, Milverton, what is sure to be said against any special scheme for getting into Parliament men of great ability and large powers of work. It will be said, after all, these must be puny, fastidious people, who have not courage to face popular assemblages, or the skill to ingratiate themselves with large bodies of men : otherwise they would be in Parliament now.

*Milverton.* I know it will be said : but is it true ? Want of means, want of local influence, and want of a certain subserviency are the defects which really prevent such men from getting into Parliament.

*Dunsford.* I think that part of the subject which requires

to be worked out most and to be explained most, is where Milverton said that there was still great room for action, judicious or injudicious, on the part of government.

*Milverton.* I am willing to take issue with anybody on that point. Those who would reduce the functions of government to the lowest—and I claim to be one of that body—must admit, that government has to protect life and property, to take care of the public health, to collect and disburse the public revenue, and to manage Foreign and Colonial affairs. Is not that enough to do? Is there not room for exceeding sagacity, or exceeding folly, in such wide transactions? And can the wisdom of individuals, working only in their own natural spheres of action, do much to further or prevent the inevitable action of Government in these great matters?

Then there is another thing that is not generally noticed in these discussions upon government. Learned and elaborate writers, like Mr. Buckle for instance, point out, and very truly, that government, when it acts most wisely, generally does so by adopting the wisdom that had its rise in a former generation. They show, for example, that free trade had been thought out by studious persons long before it became a public question. I suppose we can all certify to that; and I can remember, as a youth, reading the arguments upon free trade, seeing that they were impregnable, declaring that they would prevail, but not having a notion whether they would do so in my time.

Now, you know, to these philosophic historians a generation of men is not of much importance, or what goes on while that generation is upon the earth. But to the generation itself the questions of the day are all-important. It is everything to them, how far statesmen are inclined to accept or resist the wisdom of remarkable individuals in a former age. Adam Smith writes a deeply thoughtful book, pregnant with good for mankind. Is it not also a great advantage that

there should be statesmen in the next generation ready to receive the wisdom of Adam Smith ; or, at least, less inclined than ordinary statesmen would be to offer stout resistance to it ? The pace, therefore, at which good measures will gain ground depends much upon our having statesmen who are sensible recipients of other men's wisdom. It is everything for us, who are alive, cumbering the earth, that some wise measures should be adopted in our generation.

In a word, you may talk for ever about the force of public opinion doing this or that ; but you will never persuade any rational man that it is not a great blessing for him to have at the head of affairs in his country the most intelligent and capable men that can be found.

*Ellesmere.* Certainly. Every practical man must coincide with you. The affairs of the world do not go on by themselves ; and highly placed folly, or idleness, must do incalculable mischief.

Having thus heartily agreed with you, I am sure you will consent to our breaking off the discussion, and taking a walk along that pleasant esplanade. The troops are gone ; the trumpets have ceased to sound : and Milverton's good humour will shine out again, when he meets only little boys and girls playing about with their sober mammas and pretty nurses, instead of those clattering, befurred, befeathered, and belaced gentry, called soldiers, for whom of late he has entertained a very considerable aversion. Besides, there is much to be seen at this place, which has known many races, and endured all manner of governments, Belgic, Roman, Carlovingian, and Imperial. It could tell us a few things. Oh, that towns could speak ! But now, come along : I must show you the round church in the citadel, which is like ours at Cambridge.

Ellesmere rose ; and the rest of us were not slow to follow him. I think our discussion this day was not



unprofitable ; and, at any rate, it had the effect of restoring Milverton's good humour. It is a great comfort to a man to be able to talk out his grievances. That is, perhaps, one of the chief advantages inherent in Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have since referred to Mr. Hare's treatise on *The Election of Representatives*, and I extract the following passage which embodies that part of Mr. Hare's proposed law which Milverton looked upon with most favour. But the whole treatise is well worth studying.

"The adoption of the principle that a quota of electors, by unanimity in their choice, may return a representative, would, with the aid of other arrangements of a mechanical kind, and of no difficulty, enable every individual elector—who shall consider the choice that the majority of the constituency in which he happens to be registered is disposed to make, as the result of corruption or of intrigue to which he will not lend himself, or who shall entertain opinions with which those of their favourite candidate do not harmonise, or who shall consider that a better or a wiser selection can be made, and that with such a belief it is his duty to make it—to exercise his vote according to his own judgment. The principle might be embodied in and made effectual by the following law :—

"IV. Every candidate, whose name is contained in the list of candidates hereinafter mentioned, for whom the full quota of votes shall be polled (subject to any qualification or disqualification otherwise imposed by law), shall be returned as a member to serve in Parliament, in manner hereinafter mentioned.

"It will, of course, be immediately perceived, that this law would have consequences far more extensive even than the admission of the voices and opinions of an aggregate of minorities, numbering half a million of electors, great as those consequences would be. The admission and concentration of all those whom the numerical majorities would, if dominant, exclude, in truth involves the representation of all classes and all interests. It is because the simple expression of the numerical majority, under a system of equality in suffrage and district, would deprive all classes, except

the most numerous, of any weight in the House of Commons, that the framers of our representative system exhaust themselves in ingenious contrivances to parcel the electors into such divisions that some may neutralise others, and thus reduce to its minimum the evil which they apprehend. More than to diminish the evil effects which must result from the extinction of all political power, except that of the poorer classes, they seem scarcely to hope. The object should rather be, to exclude no legitimate influences, and to give such a scope and direction to all political energy, that every elector, in his sphere, and according to his knowledge, may labour to obtain the maximum of good."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## DESPOTISM.

To listen to a good discussion of a difficult question is an immense pleasure to me. That is not to be wondered at, for I do not often have the pleasure of listening to good discussions. But it surprises me to find that Ellesmere, whose life is spent in listening to arguments, and inventing them, should be so fond of discussion as he is. We were walking together up and down the public gardens at Metz, when he began to deplore to me that we had come to the end of our resources in regard to providing subjects for discussion. "You will not be persuaded, I fear, to give us another essay on a kindred subject to pleasantness. I could not stand another essay from Mr. Midhurst, even if we could get one from him. I have exhausted myself in my elaborate and truthful discourse 'On the Arts of Self-advancement.' And, as for the girls, they cannot write. Doubtless they send home very long letters to their friends, in which they describe the costume of the peasantry, and foreign ways and habits of all kinds; for these she-creatures are very observant. But if we could turn one of their letters into an essay, it would not give room for large discussion.

Our only hope is Milverton ; and he has abjured essay-writing. Still, if we can get him to give us such an outpouring upon any other subject as we had yesterday upon government, it is nearly as well for us as if we had something that was carefully planned and scrupulously worked out. I have always said, as you know, that pamphlets are excellent reading, because a man does not say in them more than he is full of at the time. He has not to look about for topics. The moment that you look about for topics you are in danger of becoming sophistical, and, at least, of saying something that you have not ruminated over—something that you have not had second or third thoughts about. I, therefore, should be well content if we could get another speech from Milverton ; and I think I see my way to getting it. He is evidently most apprehensive of war. He is evidently troubled in his mind about despotism. You will see that, unless I manage very badly, I shall get an outburst from him upon that subject. It will be arrived at in a very round-about manner. All you will have to do will be to back me up when the opportunity occurs.”

We said no more about the matter then, and I left Ellesmere to manage his plan in his own fashion.

In the afternoon we were sitting on a bench in these pleasant gardens at Metz, all except Ellesmere, who had stayed at home to answer his letters. Suddenly, we saw him running towards us with an expression of terror on his countenance. I saw directly that it was feigned, and whispered to Mildred that it was so, fearing lest she

should be alarmed. The moment he joined us, he began to talk vehemently.

*Ellesmere.* Consult with me, Milverton ; comfort me ; do something to restore my peace of mind. What is the good of a friend, if he cannot find some comfort for one even in the most deplorable circumstances ? Such an event is going to happen ! It is all over with us. The workhouse stares me in the face ; and an ugly building it generally is to stare at one.

*Milverton.* Good gracious ! What has happened ? Has Louis Napoleon—— ?

*Ellesmere.* No, no : Louis d'or, not Louis Napoleon, is in fault. The girls here will laugh at my distress, but they have no fine feelings. You men will pity me. I have just been reading something which seems to prove to me conclusively that gold will fall in value, and I have been working all my life for gold. My investments are such as I see political economists declare are sure to suffer first.

[Ellesmere has an additional pleasure in talking in this way from the hope of teasing Mildred, but she understands him better now, and could not be made to believe that he is a great lover of money.]

I have been working all my life, I say, for guineas, which are now to turn into half-guineas. Oh dear, oh dear ! I am a gulled and swindled individual. I shall write to everybody to pay me double what they have paid me ; and if I invent another essay for Dunsford, I shall charge him for it at the rate of a sack of corn per line. Indeed, I shall take nothing now but corn by way of fees, and I shall have a granary in Pump-court.

But seriously, Milverton, is it not dreadful? I dare say, though, you do not feel it as I do. How few people feel as they ought for poor persons of property! [Here Ellesmere assumed a whining mendicant tone that was irresistibly ludicrous.] All mine is in funds and mortgages. Has anybody here got a bit of land to sell? As for that wretch Milverton, the disaster evidently does not come with any great shock upon him. He has probably been pothering about it for a long time.

*Milverton.* Yes, I have foreseen for many years that a great rise of prices must come. But then I have had peculiar advantages for studying the subject. The rise of prices which took place in Europe after the Conquest of Peru is familiar to me.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Have you any facts? It is a question of immense interest.

*Milverton.* Were we at home, I have no doubt I could rout out an abundance of facts. Some I can remember now. The rise in the price of land was enormous. I am almost afraid to tell you the instances that I have seen quoted as regards those times. Still I can only give you the facts as I found them set down. I have seen it stated, for instance, that a *mayorazgo* (that means an estate of inheritance), of which the fee-simple was bought at a little over a hundred pounds just before the Conquest of Peru, produced in the early part of the next century sixteen hundred pounds a year. Then, a man would leave land for the purpose of mass being said for his soul in a particular convent, and for the feeding of the convent for that day on which the mass was to be said. This land produced, before the conquest, about five shillings per annum. After the conquest it produced one hundred and eighty pounds. These instances seem almost too extravagant to mention. There is, however, another, which I remember, and which I am sure does not exaggerate the rise of prices. Garcilasso

de La Vega (from whom I derived the statements I have just made) mentions that in the year fifteen hundred and sixty he bought a pair of shoes for a *real* and a half at Seville, and that in the year sixteen hundred and thirteen a similar pair of shoes cost at Cordova five *reals*, although Cordova was a cheaper place than Seville.<sup>1</sup> You will observe that the rise of prices took place after the mines of Peru began to produce largely. We have a statement based upon official evidence, that from one mine alone there came to Spain, and were registered, no less than three hundred millions of *pesos* of silver. A *pesos* is equivalent to four shillings and eightpence farthing.

*Ellesmere.* This is atrocious. I come to this man for comfort; and he takes up the large hammer of History, and knocks me down with it. I suppose he thinks that to be stunned and rendered insensible is some comfort.

*Milverton.* I could give you other instances in which estates changed in value from maravedis to ducats. Two hundred maravedis were worth one shilling and twopence: a ducat was worth between four and five shillings.

*Ellesmere.* You seem to delight in all this.

*Milverton.* Well, I am not so very unhappy about it. There are a good many indebted people in the world, and they will be better off. There are a good many national

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<sup>1</sup> Milverton afterwards furnished me with the passage. "De la propria manera ha crecido el valor, y precio de todas las demás cosas que se gastan en la Republica, asi de bastimento, como de vestido, y calçado, que todo ha subido de precio de la manera que se ha dicho; y todavía sube, que el Año de mil y quinientos y sesenta, que entré en España, me costaron los dos primeros pares de çapatos de Cordovan, que en Sevilla rompi, á real y medio cada par; y oi, que es Año de mil y seiscientos y trece, valen en Cordova los de aquel jaez, que eran de una suela, cinco reales, con ser Cordova Ciudad mas barata que Sevilla."—*Historia general del Peru*, parte 2, lib. 1, cap. 6.

debts, and these will press less heavily upon the poor taxpayers.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Warlike monarchs, however, will take care to increase the national debts, so that the people will gain very little advantage from the fall in gold.

*Milverton.* "Ay ; there's the rub." Not only will they do that, but by artificial restrictions of all kinds they will probably prevent the influx of gold having its due effect gradually ; and the fall will come with a crash.

*Ellesmere.* Hurrah for Despotism ! At least it may keep us right for our time.

*Milverton.* How can you be so absurd, Ellesmere !

*Ellesmere.* Do not be an enraged political economist. Such people, if you doubt their doctrines for a moment, become as furious as great scholars when their aorists and Greek articles are attacked. You have only to mention the word "value" in a circle of political economists ; and there is sure to be, what the vulgar call, a shindy. But that is not the point at present. The question is about despotisms. You ideologists (I delight in that word of Napoleon's) are sure to be full of denunciations against despotism. But prove your words, my man. Are not the streets charmingly clean in towns ruled over by a despot ? How orderly everything is ! And then one is not bothered by leading articles in newspapers. What things of that kind there are, one need not read, because they contain no information, and are allowed to argue only in one direction. This is an immense saving of time and trouble.

I need not proceed with this conversation. The reader, who is in the plot, will see that Ellesmere had gained his point. Milverton became more vehement, and Ellesmere more provoking. Finally, Milverton was worked up into promising that he would give us a bit



of his mind on the subject of Despotism. Indeed, he pledged himself to do so in the course of that day ; and, meeting afterwards at the same spot, Milverton, with the aid of a few notes, made the following speech to us.

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Even in affairs that are purely secular it must be admitted that the Old Testament is a mine of wisdom. And, perhaps, there are few transactions recorded in it more profoundly instructive than the appointment of the first king who ruled over Israel. As every word requires to be pondered, I will read you part of the chapter from Samuel, in which he declares what will be the doings of this king whom the people demand to have set over them ; and I am sure you will say that if it had been written yesterday, it could hardly be more applicable than it is to the present state of human affairs.

“ Now, therefore, hearken unto their voice : howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

“ And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king.

“ And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you ; he will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen ; and some shall run before his chariots.

“ And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

“And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

“And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

“And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers and to his servants.

“And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

“He will take the tenth of your sheep : and ye shall be his servants.

“And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you ; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.

“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel : and they said, Nay ; but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord.

“And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.”<sup>1</sup>

And the end of it was, as it has been observed with much irony, that Saul went out to seek his father Kish's asses, and found a people to rule over.

The position of despotism is untenable in modern times. We have ceased to believe in the divine right of monarchs. The Russian peasant may be taught, and

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<sup>1</sup> 1st Samuel, chap viii. vv. 9-22.



haply may believe, that his Czar is “an emanation from the Deity.” But people, who are the least advanced in civilisation, do not believe that one man is more an emanation from the Deity than another.

Again, arts, sciences, and even manual dexterities are so numerous and various now that no one man can excel in a twentieth part of them. In very early ages, there was but one great art—the art of war. In that, the despotic monarch might be, or might have been, the foremost man in his dominions ; and might by nature have some claim to kingship.

Either a despot represents and acts with the wisdom of the majority of the nation ; or he does not. If he does, all reasonable people will admit that the wise part of the nation ought to have an opportunity of acting for itself, and thereby strengthening and increasing its wisdom. If he does not act according to this wisdom, he is merely sustaining a high part of forcible folly. It is clearly better that he should be away.

But it may be contended that there is often a necessity for speed of action, which speed can only be ensured by the concentration of power in one hand. This necessity rarely occurs. When it did occur amongst the Romans, we know how it was provided for by a temporary Dictatorship. In nine cases out of ten, this speed of action is injurious to the world ; and in the tenth, which is generally some grand occasion for defence, it is not found by experience that constitutional governments are signally wanting.

It is true that great purposes have been fulfilled and great benefits attained, indirectly, by despotism. Tribes have thus been consolidated into nations. One language has been made to prevail over a large extent of country, which would otherwise have been afflicted by fifty different dialects. And, which is perhaps the greatest benefit, Despotism has counteracted Oligarchy, and has been the means whereby the lowest class of all in the community has been considerably raised : Despotism has aided in doing away with serfdom. Two of the before-named purposes have been already fulfilled throughout the earth : the third is in process of fulfilment ; and it must now, I think, be admitted, that in civilised countries Despotism is rather out of date.

It has been urged in favour of despotisms that Art has flourished under them. On the other hand, it is contended that the greatest works of art have been effected by free men in states that were at any rate partially free. The controversy does not appear to me of much importance. If it could be proved that Art had remarkably flourished under despotisms, I should merely say in answer that Art is but a small thing in the life of nations ; and that it interests, comparatively speaking, but a few people. I doubt, however, whether throughout all time the highest Artists have not been singularly free men, and such as have maintained anything but a servile position towards the greatest personages with whom they came in contact. We all know how Titian lived with Charles the Fifth, and with Francis the First.

This brings me naturally to another branch of the subject, which is very difficult to work out well, because it requires a minute knowledge of other times. Now the only times that I know with some intimacy are those of Charles the Fifth ; and I can only say that Charles the Fifth's government, which might easily be classed amongst despotisms, was not what we should call a despotism. The way in which we men are most easily deluded in argument is this. We use words of a general character under which in our minds we have arranged bundles of qualities, and these words do not quite correspond with the realities in life which they are supposed to correspond with. Hence, if we would be other than pedants, we must perpetually recur to the meaning of our words, compare them with the real things to which we are applying these words, and introduce the modifications that are required when we are discussing real things. To use the homely French proverb, *Il y a fagots, et fagots* ; there are despotisms and despotisms ;—which means that despotisms differ immensely in character.

As a notable instance of this, the despotism in a country that is surrounded by neighbouring free countries will be a very different thing, and will act very differently from the despotism which is neighboured by despotic powers—just as Catholicism is deeply affected by Protestantism, and Protestantism by Catholicism. If either of these great powers were in the world alone, it would act very differently from what it does. But each keeps the other greatly in order. And so a despotic government

which is blessed with a free government for a neighbour, has a mirror in which her features may sometimes be distorted, but in which there is often a true image of her to be seen,—and she cannot help looking at it occasionally.

Then there is the despotism based upon conquest, which differs very much from the despotism that has arisen out of tumult and disorder. Perhaps the ugliest form of despotism is that which not only has arisen out of a tumultuous democracy, but which perpetually refers to some one act of democracy as the source of its power. This reference is in general a farce. It corresponds to what you read of in books, of an imaginary contract entered into, at some unknown time, between a monarch and his people, but which forms a good starting point for writers who delight in dealing with forms of government in the abstract.

Nowhere, perhaps, is the way more clearly seen in which a tyranny grows out of an appeal to democracy, than in the history of Florence.

Over and over again, at critical periods, the populace were summoned by the great bell into the grand square to hold a *parlamento*. Sometimes there were armed men in the adjoining palace. The populace created what was called a *Balia*<sup>1</sup>—that is, they gave fifty or

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<sup>1</sup> “In 1393, after a partial movement in behalf of the vanquished faction, they assembled a Parliament, and established what was technically called at Florence a *Balia*. This was a temporary delegation of sovereignty to a number, generally a considerable number, of citizens, who, during the period of their dictatorship, named the magistrates, instead of drawing them by lot, and banished suspected

sixty persons, belonging to the predominant faction, despotic power to settle the state, and to name the officers of government. If we consider it, nothing can well be more absurd than seeking to find a just basis for power in a momentary appeal to an enthusiastic or a frightened populace. It is a mockery of deliberation, worthy of a Mephistopheles to call people into council for one occasion, when they are to have no opportunity of reconsidering their decisions. It would be a mockery even if the assemblage were composed of wise, grave persons, utterly unfettered by fear, or undisturbed by faction, in their deliberations; but for whom in their corporate capacity there was to be no existence to-morrow.

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individuals. A precedent so dangerous was eventually fatal to themselves, and to the freedom of their country."—HALLAM'S *Middle Ages*, vol. i. p. 536.

See also the account of the restoration of the Medici, in Guicciardini, which is well worth consideration.

"Convocò subito, così proponendo Giuliano dei Medici, in sulla piazza del palazzo col suono della campana grossa il popolo al parlamento, dove quegli, che vi andarono essendo circondati dalle armi dei soldati, e dei giovani della Città, che avevano prese le armi per i Medici, consentirono, che a circa cinquanta Cittadini, nominati secondo la volontà del Cardinale, fosse data sopra le cose pubbliche la medesima autorità, che aveva tutto il popolo (chiamano i Fiorentini questa potestà così ampla Balla): per decreto dei quali, ridotto il governo a quella forma, che solea essere innanzi all' anno mille quattrocento novantaquattro, e messa una guardia di soldati ferma al palazzo, ripigliarono i Medici quella medesima grandezza, ma governandola più imperiosamente, e con arbitrio più assoluto di quello, che solea avere il padre loro."—*Istoria d' Italia*, libro undecimo.

Again, the despotism that is allied to centralisation differs immensely from the despotism that may flourish at the centre, but which does not aim to direct minutely the extremities. Considerable felicity and much freedom of thought and action might exist in a country where the people were accustomed to manage all their local affairs, and were not interrupted or controlled in those affairs by a despotism which contented itself with acting only upon great occasions. In the Middle Ages there were many such forms of government. Practically a town managed itself. The sovereign got what money he could from it ; obtained what men-at-arms he could persuade or force to follow his banner ; but in all minor matters the town was greatly left to itself. The men in that town formed their opinions for themselves upon all manner of subjects. No despotism stretched out its interfering hand to regulate every public work. No ideas bred at the centre prevailed over the modes of thought, the habits, and the ways of the population of this town. Ghent lived the life that seemed to Ghent most profitable and most pleasurable. Valladolid, too, lived its life after its own fashion, quite different from the life of Ghent ; and perhaps neither of these lives was at all similar to, or constrained by the life at the Court of the so-called despot who ruled over both these towns.

I do not say that this form of government can be compared with constitutional government, inasmuch as it lacks security. The moment that a great question arose, such as a religious difference, the despot forthwith desired



to impress his own views upon all his subjects, tyranny began to act vivaciously, and the common life in all these towns was sought to be regulated by the fancy of the despot. We must not, however, confound such a despotism, as it acts in ordinary times, with one that is based upon conquest or democracy, which is addicted to centralisation, and which inevitably seeks to impress its notions upon all the minds that come under its fatal sway.

I have said enough upon the above head to show that for practical purposes each despotism must be considered by itself, with all its surroundings and with all the peculiarities that are inherent to it.

I now bring forward two arguments of great weight, as it seems to me, derived from a quarter to which we do not generally look for arguments against despotism. All those who have studied the works of Machiavelli, must have noticed how pervading a thought it was with that author, that the dispositions of ruling men should coincide with the times in which they live. In his chapter on Fortune he points out how one disposition is good now, and another disposition good then, according as it corresponds with the nature of the times. His favourite instance is that of Pope Julius the Second, whose "impetus and fury" so well accorded with the temper of the times, that all his enterprises succeeded. Machiavelli argues that if other times of a different character had come, that Pope would have been ruined, for he imagines that the Pope's furious temper would have remained the

same.<sup>1</sup> Another instance which Machiavelli adduces is to be observed in the conduct of the Roman Fabius. There was a time when the dilatory disposition of Fabius was the salvation of the state. There came another time, even in the life of Fabius, when that disposition, if it had prevailed in the Roman Senate, might have ruined the affairs of Rome by preventing Scipio from carrying the war into Africa. A third instance (and all his instances are worth attending to) is that of Piero Soderini, the Gonfaloniere of Florence, who conducted all his affairs with gentleness and humanity. But sterner times came. Soderini's gentleness was out of place; and he and his country were ruined.<sup>2</sup> Now comes the great argument of Machiavelli against despotic power. "*Hence*" he says "*it arises that a republic* [under the word republic we may of course include limited monarchy] *has longer life and enjoys good fortune much longer than a despotism; since a republic can accommodate itself better than a Prince can to the diversity of times, by reason of the diversity of citizens which are in*

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<sup>1</sup> "Papa Giulio II. procedette in tutto il tempo del suo Pontificato con impeto e con furia, perchè i tempi l'accompagnarono bene, gli riuscirono le sue imprese tutte. Ma se fossero venuti altri tempi, ch' avessero ricerca altro consiglio, di necessità rovinava; perchè non avrebbe mutato nè modo, nè ordine nel maneggiarsi."—*Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, libro terzo.

"Condusse adunque Giulio con la sua mossa impetuosa quello che mai altro Pontefice con tutta l' umana prudenza avrebbe condotto; perchè se egli aspettava di partirsi da Roma con le conclusioni ferme, e tutte le cose ordinate, come qualunque altro Pontefice avrebbe fatto, ma non gli riusciva."—*Il Principe*, capitolo 25.

<sup>2</sup> See GUICCIARDINI, *Istoria d' Italia*, libro undecimo.

*it. For a man that is accustomed to proceed in one fashion, as it has been said, does not ever change : and it follows by necessity that when the times change into such as are unfitted for his mode of procedure he is ruined."*<sup>1</sup>

The above is a great argument, worthy of large consideration. For my own part I think it falls under a much higher law than has yet been indicated. Surely, cultivated thought is one of the great sources of capital in a nation. The main objection to slavery is that we lose so much thought by it. The advantage of any education of the humble classes is that we gain so much additional thought by it. Inventions of all kinds spring up among a people that are in the least degree educated. You give a village boy one or two books to read, and they perhaps lead him to a great invention or an important discovery, which he might never have made, or, even if he had made, might never have been able to express, but for this small amount of education.

If Newton had been an uneducated pauper, we should have had no *Principia*. There would have been grand thoughts in a dumb man; but the state would have

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<sup>1</sup> "Di qui nasce che una repubblica ha maggior vita, ed ha più lungamente buona fortuna che un principato; perchè ella può meglio accomodarsi alla diversità de' temporali, per la diversità de' cittadini che sono in quella, che non può un principe. Perchè un uomo che sia consueto a procedere in un modo, non si muta mai, come è detto; e conviene di necessità, quando si mutano i tempi disformi a quel suo modo, che rovini."—*Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, libro terzo.

reaped no benefit. Whereas the advantage that the state has received from Newton is incalculable.

This, however, is rather the social aspect of the question. Machiavelli kept closely to politics, and from that point of view the advantage of diversity of mind is also incalculable. That nation is starved in political thought, where there is no diversity of mind employed in politics.

I proceed to another argument, suggested to me by Machiavelli, but which I am not aware of his having stated anywhere. To speak frankly, I think it is more important than his own. I feel sure that, had he lived in our times, it would have occurred to him, and he would have made great use of it.

Throughout, Machiavelli supposes that his Prince, or ruling person, will never change his mode of action. I would not presume to set myself up against such a master of thought as Machiavelli ; but in this I think he goes too far. I fancy that, if I were a ruling person, I could change my mode of action. Every one of you here present fancies the same. You think that you could at one time have played the part of Fabius, and at another that of Scipio. You think you could now have been a discreet Pope, like Leo the Tenth, and now a tempestuous one like Julius the Second. Machiavelli holds the contrary, and gives two reasons for it. First, that we cannot oppose that to which nature inclines us : secondly, that, having found one mode of action succeed, it is

impossible to persuade ourselves that we can gain any benefit by taking another course.<sup>1</sup> Experience rather goes to confirm his view of the case ; but very few persons do change their modes of action. But the great point is, that whether, in consonance with the times, we could change our mode of action or not, *we should never be able to persuade other people that we had changed it.* It is almost impossible to over-rate the damnatory nature of this supposed fixity of policy in a state. I have not the least doubt that Spain owes her downfall to the belief that prevailed throughout Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in a fixed policy of aggressive domination on her part ; which policy had been adopted by one or two of her monarchs, but which doubtless frightened Europe long after there was any occasion for alarm. My argument, then, is,—not only that a wholesome change of policy can more easily prevail in a free government, but that it can be believed in and acted upon by other nations. Suppose a monarch to show great craft and deep designs of aggression. It is in vain that he becomes a wiser man, and changes his policy. The world is slow, and justly slow, to give him credit for the change. And his people may be ruined because they have no

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<sup>1</sup> “E che noi non ci possiamo mutare, ne sono cagione due cose. L' una, che noi non ci possiamo opporre a quello, a che c' inclina la natura. L' altra, che avendo uno con un modo di procedere prosperato assai, non è possibile persuadergli che possa far bene a procedere altrimenti ; donde ne nasce che in un uomo la fortuna varia, perchè ella varia i tempi, ed egli non varia i modi.”—*Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, libro terzo.

legitimate means of proving that the policy of their country has changed. The above are not fanciful considerations: they depend upon laws of the human mind, and are applicable everywhere and in all times. Had George the Third been a despotic monarch, followed by despotic successors, how slow our colonies would have been to believe that his or his successors' policy had changed towards them, even if it had done so. Thus the real rigidity of despotism and its supposed rigidity are both alike injurious to a nation in its dealings with surrounding nations.

*Ellesmere.* Forgive me for interrupting; but is that Machiavelli's chief view of Fortune, namely, that it depends upon the disposition of the fortunate falling in with the temper and the circumstances of the times?

*Milverton.* Yes, with this exception, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman, and therefore friendly to the young, who with audacity command her.<sup>1</sup> And I think he would go so far (in which I do not at all agree with him) as to maintain that a despotism could not arise except in a corrupt state.<sup>2</sup> I think it

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<sup>1</sup> "E però sempre, come donna, è amica de' giovani, perchè sono meno rispettivi, più feroci, e con più audacia la comandano."  
—*Il Principe*, cap. 25.

<sup>2</sup> "Sarebbe adunque stato Manlio un uomo raro e memorabile, se fusse nato in una città corrotta. E però debbono i cittadini che nelle repubbliche fanno alcuna impresa o in favore della libertà, o in favore della tirannide, considerare il soggetto che eglino hanno, giudicare da quello la difficoltà delle imprese loro. Perchè tanto è difficile e pericoloso voler fare libero un popolo che voglia viver servo, quanto è voler fare servo un popolo, che voglia vivere libero."  
—*Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, libro terzo.

right to tell you this, as my arguments hereafter would rather go to prove the contrary. And as you have interrupted me here, I may as well mention to you, that I shall not go into any arguments against despotism founded on the rights of man. That branch of the subject has often been discussed. We know nearly all that can be said about it; and I would rather consider the matter in a practical point of view, taking things as they are before us. It is only at rare intervals that these abstract questions about the rights of man, and the like, have any great effect upon the world.

It is not until men have largely thought over and investigated the evils that flow from despotism, that they can thoroughly sympathise with the deep fear that possessed the ancient democracies of Greece, and can tolerate the extraordinary means which those democracies took to prevent their falling under a despot.

Ostracism seems a very harsh and almost a ludicrous method of preventing the existence of absolute power. But it is much more wise perhaps than has been generally imagined. The ostracised person was not touched in body, goods, or estate. He was merely told by his fellow-citizens, "You are becoming too powerful to live amongst us. With all respect for your merits, indeed in consequence of those merits, we decline to have the benefit of your society." The last time that ostracism was used was against a mere demagogue; and this use of it brought the custom into disrepute.

It must not be supposed, however, that despotism ever arises without fitting antecedents—that it springs

out of the earth fully armed, and ready to commence its natural career of torpifying activity. It is generally the product of some previous wrong-doing. Samuel's sons judged the people unrighteously; and the Israelites clamoured for a king. Indeed the state of human affairs is always significantly illustrated by the course of a river amidst yielding land. The stream makes an indent on this side of its banks, meets with some obstruction at last, and is thrown off with violence to the other side, where it makes a similar indentation. You foresee that it will be so; and thus, too, in political affairs, after the long experience which history gives us, we no sooner see an indent made by democracy, especially if made with violence, than we feel sure that there will be a similar one made at no great distance of time by despotism. Violence is never childless. And, what is worse, her children always resemble her most closely. It has at last become quite a commonplace thing to trace the alternations of extreme political power. The practical result to be drawn from such observations is that when a people have got anything like a tolerable government they should go on enduring, improving, amending, in a spirit of great sobriety, being perfectly aware that any change that is extravagant and immoderate is but the beginning of a sinuous course of extravagance and immoderation.

The greatest evil of despotism is the gradual destruction of thought which takes place under it. This point has been touched upon, in reference to Machiavelli's



argument in favour of a republic ; but it requires to be worked out a little in detail. Men by degrees find out that it is not worth while to think much, while they are living under a despotic government. The whole nation, perhaps,—at least the thinking part of it,—is against a particular course being adopted. The despot acts. The thoughts of thoughtful men thereupon vanish into the air. The crowd, which loves the noise and bustle of action, at once applauds the despot's act. Even the thoughtful men are carried away by the force of circumstances, and have to reconstruct their plans and projects, the former ones having become hopeless for the moment.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately they find out how little force they have in public affairs, and they cease to think about them otherwise than as the crowd thinks. At last you have but one mind for a great country ; and we may appeal to the history of the world to say whether that one mind has generally proved itself of such a colossal nature as to justify its dwarfing all other minds into political uselessness.

There are several considerations which should lead the world to have the greatest dread of a nascent power that, even remotely, threatens to become extreme. The tendency of all power is to accretion, and, indeed, to very rapid accretion. Observe the rise and progress of despotism. You have at first to fight it behind a wall.

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<sup>1</sup> Milverton's words have received a strong confirmation from recent events. Does anybody suppose that before January last (1859) any ten Frenchmen cared sufficiently about the state of Italy to go to war to remedy it?—[D.]

Those who early discern the rising mischief meet with but lukewarm friends and companions, who tell them, "See it is only behind a wall ; we can easily rush over the barrier, if the creature should misbehave itself." Then it mounts behind a parapet ; then it throws out slight defences ; soon it is at the top of a great tower, commanding a system of fortifications, whence it surveys and overawes the whole district, and from which it will not be dislodged until rivers of blood have flowed in defending and attacking it.

There is a very common saying (especially amongst those who live under a constitutional government) which requires to be carefully considered, as it tends to further and to favour despotism. Commenting upon another nation, they exclaim, "Those people will not endure a despotism long ; and, if they do so, they deserve to have it." Does anybody who says this know what he talks about? Has he lived under a despotism? Has he ever considered the enormous difficulty which any one has to encounter who makes the slightest move towards liberty, while living under a despotic government? All the machinery of social life is ranged against this man. Not only the mechanism of brute force, but the strongest springs of human action are opposed to him. Except in times of great commotion the world is ruled by middle-aged people. Those middle-aged people are the fathers of families. To them the families are nearly everything. They may deplore the state of public affairs, but those

affairs occupy only their second thoughts. The first thoughts of every day are devoted to the protection and furtherance of the family. "The powers that be" are apt to become the ruling divinities of every domestic household. If it were not for youths, and for the common people, whose families are not, after all, such a weight upon them as upon the middle classes, there would scarcely ever be such a thing as a change of dynasty, or an outbreak against government. And then remember those words of Wordsworth, the most significant perhaps that he ever wrote—

"But the sense of most  
In abject sympathy with power is lost."

It will not do, therefore, to say that if people endure a despotism they deserve it. Let any man only put himself in imagination in the place of another who sincerely abhors and abjures despotic government, but who lives under a despotism. Will you tell me what he is to do? Picture him as residing in some country town. The press is against him. The people, until they come to be very much pinched, are not with him. The local ministers of the despot are wary and vigilant, longing to prove their fidelity by severe interference with any person suspected to be hostile to the government. Spies, if not in his own household, are not far off from him. His thoughts are worth money. And he lives in a country town, subject to the scrutiny which always exists in such places. The highest natures may well bend under such a yoke as this, from which they can see so little chance

of escaping ; and it is very ungenerous for free men to utter any reproaches against a man who is in the singularly helpless situation that I have just described.

Again, would you have him address the despot directly? You feel that he might as well address the sea, and recommend the breakers, when they are bounding in upon the shore, to comport themselves wisely and gently. On the other hand, with a mob, unless it be a hired one, you have always some chance of being heard. We must admit that Lamartine and other speakers did wonderful things for humanity in 1848. And the moment you have to address any assemblage less tumultuous than a mob, your chance of being fairly heard rises as the assemblage is less and less like a mob, until, in such a body as the House of Commons in England, the most unpopular man, uttering the most unpopular sentiments, is nearly sure of a fair hearing, if he does not violate decorum grossly in the expression of his sentiments. This one fact alone ought to convince those who have any hankering after despotism (and there always are such men) of the immense disadvantages under which good thought and valid reasoning lie when they have to deal with a despotic government.

In considering despotism we naturally turn to think how it is that we in Great Britain have escaped it. There have doubtless been many circumstances in our favour. Some of these are purely physical, such as our insular position. Some are apparently due to mere good fortune ; but, if there is any one moral cause, I suppose it is to

be found in the tendency amongst us not to press anything too far.<sup>1</sup> This, though the result partly of national temperament, is now confirmed by a long experience of Constitutional Government, and by habitual self-rule. In commenting upon other nations we have greatly to beware of making unjust remarks upon the early beginnings of constitutional government. I suspect that few of us are quite without blame in what we have said when we were looking on at the debates of infant Assemblies in neighbouring nations. I know one man who much repents that he ever made a severe comment upon the proceedings of the last Legislative Assembly in France, being now aware how irrational it is to expect perfect fairness and temper in debate amongst any people who have not been long accustomed to freedom of discussion.

We never exhaust the attack upon any institution until we have described the good that there may be in it, and shown how much or how little that good is worth. And therefore it is but prudent as well as right to show what despotism can do. It can cleanse and beautify a city. It can maintain the strictest order. It is great in public

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<sup>1</sup> As a curious illustration of this, a Conservative lecturer addressed a large assemblage of working people a little time ago, and pointed out to them that if an extreme Reform bill were carried, all power would fall into their hands, which he justly maintained would be a great evil. Some of them called upon him the next morning, and told him that this was a point they had never before considered, and of which they saw the full importance. What may not be hoped from a people who can be so reasonable even when their own interests are concerned?

works. In foreign affairs it can act with a promptitude and clearness of resolve unknown to limited monarchies. It can occasionally perform signal acts of public charity. But in all that it does, good or bad, there is the fatal flaw that it destroys individual independence. The thing wished for is done ; but the public spirit, which is the most valuable part of the deed when it is done in a free country, is gradually undermined in a despotism. And then, again, the advance made is never sure. It perishes perhaps with one man's life. Whereas the slow advance that is accomplished after much discussion, varied opposition, and the warfare of all kinds of interests, is in its nature permanent ; and, what is more important, is full of the power of growth. A despotic Mayor or Préfet can order that a town shall be well drained and regulated in every respect. Fine streets and public fountains spring up under his potent orders. But the slow improvement that is carried out in a town, where there are discussions and battles about everything that is to be done, is deeply triumphant when it does come. Hundreds of well-informed persons are pledged to it. The improvement does not drop down with the life of an individual. It is a live thing that is planted : it is not something merely stuck into the ground, that has no root to it. It will flourish even in evil times, because in getting any root at all it has acquired large powers of endurance. It may have its reverses, but, if really a good thing, it is not liable to utter destruction. There is something of Potemkin's sham villages, which he got up to show the Empress Catherine

on her journeys, in all the whitewashed triumphs of despotism.

It may be a question whether despotisms have been more aggressive than other forms of government. It would be very difficult to prove anything in such a question, because, hitherto, there has been such a preponderance of despotism in the world. Those who are hostile to despotic government would point to Xerxes, Alexander, Napoleon, and a host of other conquerors and devastators who have been despotic monarchs. The other side would bring forward the histories of Athens, Rome, Carthage, and Venice, to show that republics have likewise been very much addicted to aggression. I have myself no doubt upon the question, and feel confident that despotisms are more dangerous to the peace of the world than any other forms of government. At the same time I feel the full difficulty of proving this. One thing, however, I think that a careful study of history would bring out before mankind : namely, that the wars undertaken by republics have generally been of a far more practical character than those undertaken by despotic monarchs. I mean that the republics have seen more to gain that was conducive, or was thought to be conducive, to the public interest than despotic monarchs have ever seen in their wars. The reason is obvious. In these free governments no one man's interest acquires a preponderating weight ; and the war will not go on if the people do not somehow or other persuade themselves that they have an interest in its continuance. If I am

right in this supposition, it must be acknowledged that there is immense gain for the world whenever the government of a great people ceases to be despotic. As an instance of what I mean, take the war between Rome and Carthage,—it was a war for existence. Then compare that with the romantic and comparatively purposeless expedition of an Alexander. Whenever you can get such a thing as a debate upon a war in a public assembly, it is, I contend, a great advantage for mankind. On the other hand, the most mischievous things for mankind are settled by two or three men in the quiet cabinets of despotic princes.

There are a great many persons who may think that there is no occasion whatever for discussing the question of despotism. They are quite convinced about it, and they are apt to think that every one else is. But some of the most important writers of the present age are by no means convinced of the preponderant evils of despotism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I subjoin a passage from Congreve's *Roman Empire of the West*, as a good illustration of the views of these writers :—"That system [the constitutional], with its fictions and its indirect action, may offer advantages at certain times—as, historically, it has done with us—but on the whole, I think it alien to good government. It has ever failed,—and I appeal to the history of England in support of my assertion, and not merely to the present disgraceful state of our government, though that is so much in accordance with past history as to exonerate, in a measure, the men at the expense of the system ;—it is failing you now, in the presence of real dangers and war. It is of more than doubtful advantage in peace. The people of this country must have felt of late that it is not a system of



Such men see more clearly than others the shortcomings of constitutional government. Being persons of sensitive natures, they deplore these shortcomings deeply. They become tired, too, of the thoughtless praise constantly bestowed by commonplace, well-to-do people on the institutions of their country, and gradually they find themselves lapsing into the idea that dictatorial government is the preferable thing. I beg to call their attention to the following statement. For children the despotic government may be admirable; and, if a nation is never to be permitted to grow out of childishness, by all means let it abide under despotism. But if the child is to become a boy, then there come the difficulties of boyhood. The question is, do you dislike growth? With growth there will always come a new set of difficulties. Nobody can

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checks, with the ultimate irresponsibility that is its result, but a vigorous unity of administration, that is required for the right conduct of a war. The poor of this country feel the effects, though they may not be aware of the cause, of the want of a vigorous central executive—of a government, in short, in the place of parliamentary no-government. It may be long before the necessity of so great a political change is acknowledged, but it is, at any rate, a possibility that it should be again acknowledged as it has been; and it would be desirable that the atmosphere of political discussion should be free enough to admit of such questions being agitated, which, speaking generally, is hardly the case. For myself, I heartily wish that the time were come when we were clear of the government of boards, call them a cabinet or a vestry, with all their complication of personal and local interests, and under the government of one—a protector or dictator, if you like to call him so—the name is unimportant: the essential is, that he should be one who would rule England as she was ruled by Cromwell.”—pp. 60, 61. London, 1855.

deplore more than I do the occasional errors and inefficiencies of parliamentary government ; but to suppose that, as the years go on, no remedy will be found, or at least attempted, for these difficulties, is to manifest a degree of hopelessness which is not warranted by any phase of our past history. I must also remark that constitutional government is as yet very young and comparatively immature. Finally, there is one argument which, when addressed to a nation, should make it very wary of parting with any form of constitutional government which it has once laid hold of. Let it only observe the speedy ending that has often come to nations that seemed very grand, but whose grandeur was based upon despotic administration at the centre. Let it notice how rapidly Persian, Median, Assyrian, Byzantine, Turkish, Mexican, Peruvian, Spanish, and other despotisms have crumbled away from any blow that has been well directed at the central figure, or from any decay or disease that has once manifested itself at the heart of government. The nation that wishes to live well and long, should never suffer any one family to be the sole depository of political power.

Again, it is certain that in all countries grievances will from time to time arise. In a constitutional government the remedy for the grievance is a change of ministry : in a despotism, it is a change of dynasty.

I need scarcely mention the common arguments against despotism—that the despot may go mad (he often has been nearly mad), and that even if you have a

good and sane despot, he may be succeeded by a bad one, or by a feeble child.

I might, with the aid of a learned person who is in our company, have given you some further account of what has been propounded about various systems of polity by certain great writers. We might thus have been enabled to discuss Aristotle's *Politics*; but, as all Aristotle's views were based upon a substratum of slavery, I think we should not have arrived at any fruitful result. We might also have considered the various republics which have been imagined by thoughtful men, such as those of Plato, Sir Thomas More, and Lord Bacon. But, lacking reality, these amusing disquisitions are not likely to give us any sure insight. I prefer to bring before you a conclusion that I have arrived at from studying the polities of several nations that are very little known to the world. My conclusion is, that political wisdom does not depend upon what we call civilisation, but is the result of an instinct of freedom belonging to certain races. I have no doubt that, calling in Dunsford's aid, I could show that such an instinct prevailed amongst the German tribes, whose manners and customs Tacitus so vividly and succinctly recalls. But the nations that I shall bring forward are some of those which existed in America at the time of the Spanish Conquest. It has astonished me to find what political sagacity prevailed occasionally in those nations. In Guatemala, for instance, a practice similar to that which existed in the Roman Empire of having a Cæsar and an

Augustus was adopted, and thus the succession to power of a man of experience was sought to be provided.<sup>1</sup> In Tlascala, the government was republican (Cortes compares it to Genoa and Venice), and was committed to four chiefs and a senate. The deliberations of the senate exercised the greatest weight in public affairs. But it is in the remarkable state of Araucana that a polity has been discovered, in which the most careful provision was made for freedom. The Araucans were not subject to a feudal levy, nor to any kind of personal service, except in time of war. They did not pay any tribute, and their

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<sup>1</sup> "The same principle prevailed when these kingdoms began to be more separated from one another, and was ultimately developed at Utatlan in a manner that will remind the learned reader of the practice of having a Cæsar and an Augustus at an early period of the Roman Empire. There were four persons designated to the royal authority. The first was the reigning monarch; the second was the reigning monarch's brother, who was called 'the elected one;' the third was the reigning monarch's eldest son, who was called by a title which the Spaniards rendered 'the Chief Captain' (el Capitan mayor); the fourth was the reigning monarch's eldest nephew, who was called 'the Second Captain' (el Capitan minor). When the monarch died, 'the elected one' succeeded to the throne, as the King of the Romans succeeded the Emperor in Germany. The Chief Captain succeeded to his place; the Second Captain to that of the Chief Captain; and then the eldest and nearest member of the Royal family took the lowest place. Thus the object was always secured of having at the head of the Government a man of experience, and of some knowledge of public affairs. . . .

"The principle, however, of not appointing a youth to power, was so strong in this province of Tuzulutlan, that afterwards, when the Spaniards came to have authority in that province, and wished to place a young man on the throne, he refused, on account of his want of experience, being desirous of following the ways of his ancestors."—*The Spanish Conquest in America*, vol. iii. pp. 253, 254.

chiefs were considered but as "the first amongst equals."<sup>1</sup> They had three orders of chiefs;<sup>2</sup> and they had a Parliament in which every business of importance was discussed.<sup>3</sup> They were a very wise and valiant people, and I believe have never been conquered. I could give several other instances of well-planned forms of government existing in these aboriginal nations.<sup>4</sup> I have, however, brought

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<sup>1</sup> I thought it right to ask for references as regards the statements which Milverton made about the Araucans; and I subjoin the extracts with which he furnished me:—"Los susodichos no estan como en el gobierno feudal, sujetos á la leva; ni á algun genero de servicio personal, sino es en tiempo de guerra. Tampoco son obligados á pagar tributo a sus Señores, los quales deben sustentarse de sus propios bienes. Bien que los respetan como á sus superiores, ó mas bien como á los primeros entre sus iguales en lo demas se atienen a sus decisiones, y los escoltan quando van fuera del estado."—MOLINA, *Historia de Chile*, vol. ii. p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> "Tres ordines de Representantes, subordinados los unos a los otros, forman esta especie de República, esto es, los Toquis, los Apo-Ulmenes, y los Ulmenes, y todos ellos tienen sus respectivos vasallos."—MOLINA, *Hist. de Chile*, vol. ii. p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> "Los Toquis no tienen mas que la sombra de la soberania. La triple-potencia que la constituye, reside en el cuerpo entero de los Varones, los quales, tratandose de qualesquier negocio de importancia, lo deciden al uso de los pueblos ordinarios de la Germania, en una Dieta general, que se llama Butacoyag, ó Aneacoyag, esto es, el Gran Consejo, ó el Consejo de los Araucanos."—MOLINA, *Hist. de Chile*, vol. ii. p. 62. Madrid, 1795.

<sup>4</sup> It is a very curious thing to notice that in these aboriginal American states the tendency was to place the highest power in the hands of four persons. They inclined to Tetrarchies rather than to Triumvirates. Now a Tetrarchy is more durable than a Triumvirate; and is less liable, I imagine, to merge into a despotism. If the Tetrarchs differ equally, so that two are divided against two, the Senate or the people have a chance of being called in to adjust

forward sufficient to support my proposition,—that very judicious polities may exist at an early stage of civilisation, if the instinct of the race is directed towards freedom. It is curious that the Araucans held a similar view of their good deities as of their chiefs; namely, that they were not to be propitiated by gifts and sacrifices. The Devil was to be propitiated, but not the good gods.

The practical result to be deduced from the above considerations is that the genius of the people must be closely thought upon, before we come to any conclusions as to what form of government it will be inclined to adopt and favour, when there is any chance for it of reconstructing a government; and we must expect that the movement towards freedom will always be slow amongst a people who have not a great love for personal liberty.

It has often been remarked how weak and inconclusive are the well-known lines of Pope,

“ For forms of government let fools contest,  
That which is best administered is best.”

On the contrary, there is some consolation in thinking that mal-administration is, in the long run, sure to put an end to those forms of government which are deeply injurious to the human race. The possession of political

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this difference. If there is difference of opinion, or of interest, in a Triumvirate, two of the Triumvirs oppress the third, and then contend for despotic power. Augustus and Antony make Lepidus a cypher; then Augustus conquers Antony; and despotism is established.

power presents itself to my mind under this strange image. I see a female figure bearing along a vase filled with liquid fire. If she moves steadily, however swiftly, the liquid fire remains in the vase ; but if not, and the flames stream out of the vase, and fall upon the earth, they burn up all they touch, and follow on after the figure, until at last they spring upon her fluttering garments, and she soon sinks down consumed. From her ashes, rises, phoenix-like, another figure, generally quite different from the former one, in face, in form, in gesture. Meanwhile, the flames leap into the vase again ; and the new figure bears on the sacred vessel, seemingly unconscious of, or unheeding, the fate of her predecessor.

You see at once how the figure that represents a government which has grown out of turbulence will be likely to have disordered garments and a certain violence of movement and of gesture. She is soon consumed. You see other figures that spill the sacred fire from carelessness, from weakness, or from indifference to humanity. The result is happily the same in all cases. The injury done reacts upon the doer ; and the miseries of mankind sooner or later find a sure avenger in the fearful liquid flames that may have destroyed their homes, their families, and all that they hold dear on earth, but which never cease to pursue the rash, feeble, or wicked figure that could not carry steadily along the celestial vase of power. And so, to my mind, there is some consolation even when I contemplate the worst of governments, that of a despot unrestrained by any mortal influences.

*Ellesmere.* One hardly likes to break into conversation after such a long-sustained simile as Milverton has just treated us with. But I suppose somebody must do it, and I am the fittest person, as being the least respectful, and the least impressible by metaphors of any kind. Besides, I am going to delight the heart of Milverton. He has made a convert of me on two important points ; and, if he does not love a convert, he is not the man I take him for.

*Dunsford.* Why, you surely were not in favour of despotism before ?

*Ellesmere.* I do not know that. When people talk of liking despotisms, they always picture themselves to themselves as the despots. I see no harm, therefore, in a despotism in which Sir John Ellesmere is the despot ; and I believe he would carry along the sacred vase in a most elegant and steady manner. Besides, he would take care to have no fluttering garments.

*Mr. Midhurst.* He would wear a kilt.

*Ellesmere.* But, seriously speaking, Milverton has convinced me that we should be very tolerant when we comment upon early and rude attempts at constitutional government. Now I confess I was not tolerant. I attended the debates of the last French Assembly. I must tell you, by the way, how comical they were. An Orator would mount the Tribune, fire off a few provoking sentences, which hit the right or the left of the Chamber very severely ; and then retire to the back of the Tribune, well knowing the clamour that would ensue. Forthwith the most violent words were exchanged between left and right. Clenched hands were held up menacingly ; and in short there was a tumult. Then the President of the Assembly commenced playing a *fantasia* upon the bell, and after incredible efforts something like silence was restored. Now comes the drollest part of the affair. You might suppose that the President would be exhausted, and would be too glad to



have a little quiet at any price. Not he. He took the opportunity of uttering some poignant, clever sentence, which gave mortal offence to the extreme right, or the extreme left. Great clamour again: then a fresh *fantasia* on the bell. Silence, however, was at last a second time restored. Then my friend the orator came forward with renewed vigour to the front of the Tribune, and recommenced his provoking speech.

But what clever fellows they were! I did not hear a man who was otherwise than a good speaker. Often I asked of some one sitting by, "Who is this?" expecting to hear that he was famous. But it was a new member whom no one had heard of before. Ah, you should have heard Montalembert speak! It was like Follett's speaking.

But really when you consider the circumstances of the times, how excusable was all this intemperance. We speak under a settled government. No man amongst us in Parliament has the slightest notion that he may awake the next morning to find that something political has happened which shall make or mar his fortunes. There are no pretenders to the throne. There is no set of politicians in England of whom it can be justly said that they wish to upset all social order. Now I did not think enough of all this. I am very, very sorry that on several occasions I spoke too slightly of that Assembly.

*Milverton.* Bravo, Ellesmere. It is quite refreshing to hear any man in these days own that he has been utterly in the wrong. It is the age of ineffectual explanations: whereas a man had often better confess at once, "I said this thing, I made this charge, but I was heated at the time; I was carried away by the necessity of ending a sentence vigorously, and I uttered words which are not justifiable."

*Mr. Midhurst.* Really, men might do so, considering that even diplomatists say things sometimes which they are very sorry for. How well I remember an old *chef* of mine,

who took snuff, he told me, upon principle, because it gave him time for thinking how he should answer. You know the elaborate business that an elderly gentleman can make of taking a pinch of snuff, and then, too, offering the box to the other diplomatist. As my *chef* was Ambassador at a very critical period for the peace of Europe, perhaps those pinches of snuff were worth hundreds of thousands of pounds to the nation.

*Ellesmere.* I shall take snuff for the future.

*Mildred.* You shall not. But what was the other thing, John, in which you agreed with my cousin? It is something rare to find you a convert to anybody's views.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I think Milverton was right when he pointed out the difficulty which any private person, however great a lover of liberty, must have in resisting a despotism which he lives under. Again, I must say I am sorry for having often said, "These people, if they were worth anything, would not endure this or that government." It is an unjust saying.

*Milverton.* It is. It would condemn ourselves. There have been periods when we, too, have endured for a considerable time governments of which we thoroughly disapproved. Do not you feel that if James the Second had not been so outrageously imprudent, we might have endured him for a long time? And, mark you, this habit of endurance, springing from a horror which all thoughtful Englishmen have of rashness in great affairs, is a large part of our strength.

But I will tell you how I was led to these considerations. You know how I like Spain and the Spaniards. Well, whenever I praised the nation, and told my friends what noble individuals I had observed amongst modern Spaniards, I was sure to be met with some rejoinder pointing out the badness of the government. I was thereupon led to see that a people might be unfortunate in their government—

that even their virtues might conspire to aid bad government. Then, as regards resistance to despotism, I was made to consider the difficulty of that by a wise friend who was always showing me the extent of that difficulty, and "putting the case," for he was a lawyer, as to what a man could do under such circumstances. I soon saw that he had a wall built round him in every direction. Do not think that I am disheartened by this. A time will come when such men can act. But it must be when a large public movement is imminent. One of the great results, however, of all thought upon this subject is that we should be very careful, both nationally and individually, not to foster the small beginnings of despotism, but to set our face against it from the first, and to maintain that discountenance.

*Dunsford.* I should think you were right, Milverton, in what you said about the bearing of despotism upon war; and if so, my aversion to despotism is greater than ever. Some little time ago I went to Woolwich in company with a party from our village——

*Ellesmere.* ——and you found that Christianity had so far advanced that they were able to turn out two million of conical bullets in a week.

*Mr. Midhurst.* And quite right too. We must be prepared.

*Dunsford.* Ellesmere seems to divine my thoughts, for that was the very fact I was going to mention,—not, however, in the satirical way in which he mentioned it.

*Milverton.* I will tell you a curious calculation that I have made about war. It is of course a very rough calculation, but I have made out that an ordinary war in Europe, between two great Powers (not a universal war like those of the days of the first Napoleon), costs about two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a day. Think of that:—a million every four days! I see in Ellesmere's eyebrows a movement of incredulity. Is it not so?

*Ellesmere.* Well, one is always dubious about large figures.

*Milverton.* I assure you that in order to be on the safe side, I have considerably under-rated what I believe to be the amount.

But I must tell you of a conversation which I had some little time ago with two of the most intelligent bankers in London on this subject. Would you like to hear some of the details of the waste which takes place in war? There may be one or two which occurred to us, and which you may not have thought of.

*Ellesmere.* By all means. I delight in details.

*Milverton.* 1. Pay of unproductive labourers, being that of those soldiers who are added to the armies in consequence of the war.

2. Transport of material to places where it is not required by nature, and where there is no preparation for the transport.

Let us consider this matter a little. A town grows up gradually; and gradually many ways of approach to it are formed, those ways having reference to the position of the town and the nature of the surrounding country that feeds that town, so that ultimately the least possible labour is employed for the conveyance of goods and provisions. We wonder sometimes how London is supplied from day to day. We little think of the labour, intellectual and physical, which has been going on for eighteen hundred years and more to provide approaches to that town. Then look what happens in war, when you have suddenly to provide, by brute force, if I may use the expression, for the transport of food, forage, clothing, and material of all kinds, for the use of hundreds of thousands of men and tens of thousands of animals, to some spot which wanted nothing of the kind before, and which is utterly unprepared to receive this material.

3. Waste and spoiling of material in the course of transport.

4. Destruction of clothing. Of course you will naturally observe that soldiers are men, and wherever they are, must be clothed; but the rapid destruction of this clothing is an incident peculiar to war.

5. Waste of iron and of other metals, also of workmanship, in ammunition. A single shell costs ten pounds.

6. Waste by destruction of the country occupied. Think what a mulberry-tree is worth, and how soon it is cut down.

7. Now comes an item which you have probably not considered, or, if you have considered it, have not estimated sufficiently high—waste from the hoarding of capital. Directly war commences, hoarding commences too. It begins at a great distance from the seat of war, and is intensified as it approaches to the seat of war. Do you suppose that anybody living at a distance of fifty or sixty miles from great armies engaged in war is inclined to lay out a single penny that he can possibly avoid laying out, however much it might be for his interest under other circumstances to do so? A man of ninety years of age, having amiable feelings for his grandchildren, may plant trees in time of peace. But the young proprietor, who at the distance of fifty miles from the seat of war, fancies on still evenings that he hears cannonading, plants nothing, and cuts down his green crops to secure something.

8. Waste, in consequence of the death, mutilation, or destitution of grown-up men having others dependent upon them, who become paupers thrown upon the state for support.

9. Pensions and gratuities for disabled soldiers and for the families of those who fall in war.

Even a small skirmish creates annuitants. Their annuities are to be added up and calculated as part of the money loss which took place on the day of the skirmish.

10. Destruction of valuable animal life. Thirty thousand

horses at twenty pounds a horse comes to a good deal of money.

11. Destruction of public works—such as roads, bridges, railroads, etc. I am told that, many years after war had ceased in France, the tracks of armies might be seen in the demolition of roads, which probably have never since been thoroughly reconstructed.

12. Destruction of the means of transport. Ships of transport are, comparatively speaking, but little injured; but, when you come to land transport, the daily loss is immense. The largest fortune in England would find itself reduced to a pittance, if it had to pay for the wheels that are destroyed in a considerable campaign.

13. Loss from the death of trained soldiers, each of whom represents a small portion of invested capital.

14. Waste and loss in re-transport, after the war is ended. Observe in daily life how careless most people are in bringing back anything that has not been wanted.

15. Loss of the products of the soldiers, which would have been produced if they had been productive labourers.

Now, I do not pretend that this is a scientific discussion of the subject. It is merely what occurred to three busy men talking in a bank parlour for a quarter of an hour. But it is really desirable that some man, who has a genius for statistics, should study some one war, and describe to us in detail the waste of it. There is nothing so ingeniously wasteful as war. The utmost skill is devoted to work of all kinds, which has only a momentary profit. You devote millions to earth-works, which are ever afterwards to be only an encumbrance to agriculture. You put metal into many shapes and forms, which are soon to be superseded, and the metal to be broken up. The waste of provisions is almost incalculable. I should be very glad to have as a fortune the hay that is lost in the hedges as the waggons heavily brush past them during the hay-season in peaceful

England. Think what must be the loss and damage of such a bulky thing as hay in its transport for warlike purposes.

In bringing all this before you, I know I am not saying anything new ; but we are apt to forget these details ; and surely they should be present to our minds at any time when war is imminent. I am not a Quaker. I do not say there is no such thing as a necessary war ; but I say, let us keep a steady eye upon the cost of war, as a branch of the subject well worth thinking of. And I repeat that my computation of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a day is a very moderate one.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Talking of war, it is an excellent thing, however commonplace it may be, to concentrate the mind on individual cases of suffering. We all know the masterly way in which Sterne brought home to us the miseries of captivity by dwelling tenderly upon the fate of a single captive. Now, the other day, I was travelling on a railroad with a number of people ; and there was one poor creature, a sailor, who had met with a deplorable accident, and was making his way by this railroad to a hospital. It was touching to see the sympathy that was felt for this one poor man by all the passengers—how anxiously and tenderly the women inquired after him ; how, with a certain awkwardness and timidity, and with an endeavour to screen themselves from observation, those who could afford to do so, went and pressed money into the poor man's hands ; and how kindly all the official persons took care of him. It was one of those accidents which would be thought nothing of in war, and after meeting with which a man would have to go on fighting. I could not help thinking what all these tender-hearted people would feel if they could see one battle-field on the next morning after a battle which they read of perhaps with tolerable complacency, hearing that there were only two thousand killed, and about three

thousand wounded. Follow to the hospital, in imagination, only one of those three thousand wounded, and you will not be in a hurry again to provoke a war.

*Dunsford.* The same idea occurred to me the other day when I was looking at a book called *The Military Events in Italy in 1848-9*. I had borne with great composure the account of battles and sieges in which there were many killed and many wounded, but at the end a single sentence impressed me more with the dread realities of war than all that I had looked at before. The sentence was this. "In the batteries before Malghèra 200 Austrian artillerymen met their death, many on the spot, some after severe surgical operations."<sup>1</sup> Those three last words "severe surgical operations" brought back to my mind a humanity which had been rather dormant while I had been reading of active and clever movements and great operations in the campaign.

*Milverton.* No man's imagination is sufficiently active in picturing to him the miseries of others, especially when those "others" are very numerous. But we wander from the subject. I am going to say something now which might appear to be in favour of despots as regards war.

Amongst an assemblage of men responsibility is apt to be divided and frittered away. But when a great responsibility, like that of commencing a war, falls upon one man, we may well wonder how he ever musters up the courage to take it. For our private sins we run into danger of our "eternal jewel," as Shakspeare says, being "given to the common enemy of man." But how any one makes up his mind to such a fearful risk for public ends (he generally tells you they are public ends), mostly of a very doubtful nature, passes my comprehension. Now gambling has no

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<sup>1</sup> Translated from the German by the Earl of Ellesmere. London : John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1851.



fascination for me. I do not wish to win other people's money, or to lose my own in that way. But still I can well imagine the fascination that it exercises, when such a man as Fox could say something like the following: "The greatest pleasure is to win at cards, and the next pleasure is to lose." But then you see in such a case there is habit, there is impulse. War, as I said before, is a deliberate affair, and when the responsibility of commencing it falls upon one or two men, you would imagine that they would not have the courage to undertake it, having some thought for their welfare in another world. Still, all experience is against one in this point. Doubtless dynastic considerations are the fatal things that prevail in monarchs' minds. Even Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, owns that though the monarch be careful in "his political person" to procure the common good, yet he is still more careful to procure the private good of himself and his family; and, if these are inconsistent, he prefers the private: for, as Hobbes adds, "the passions of men are apt to prevail over their reason." I do not remember the passage accurately, but that is the sense of it. But then Hobbes proceeds to say, a monarch is great only as his subjects are great, consequently his private interest coincides with the public interest. A more utterly fallacious argument than that it is difficult to conceive.

*Ellesmere.* I am very glad that you have mentioned Hobbes; I meant to have asked you whether you had given due weight to his writings on this subject.

*Milverton.* I have studied carefully his great chapter "On the several Kinds of Commonwealth," and it appears to me anything but profound; admirably expressed, but not borne out by common sense, or common experience—the writing of a man who knows books better than men.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I wish, Milverton, you could give us an account of the chapter: it would be very amusing.

*Milverton.* I will try; but it is almost a shame to do so

for his style is admirable, and to do him justice his own words ought to be used.

He speaks of the advantage which absolute monarchs have in the choice of counsellors, also in the length of time before action which they can use for taking counsel about it, and in the secrecy of their counsels. And then, turning to the other side, he points out that the counsellors to assemblages of men are, for the most part, those who have been "versed in the acquisition of wealth rather than of knowledge." This, I must admit, is a wonderful hit against modern Parliaments. Then he adds another pregnant remark: namely, that these counsellors will give their advice in long speeches which may excite men to action, but will not govern them when in it.

He says that the resolves of a monarch are subject to no inconstancy but that of human nature (one would think that that was enough); but that in assemblies one thing is ruled to-day, and another to-morrow.

Then he remarks that a monarch cannot disagree with himself, but that the jealousies and private interests of assemblies may be full of civil discord.

Then he admits that the favourites of monarchs may do harm, but contends that the favourites of public assemblies, orators, may do more.

After all, his great argument is that in monarchy the private interest of the monarch is the same with the interest of the nation. Now we know what a fallacy this is. These interests may be opposed; and then, again, even if the abstract proposition were true, that the private interest of the monarch always corresponded with the interest of the people, how are we to be sure that he will have the wisdom to discern this interest? How seldom he has done so! The way to answer these doctrinaires is to turn to facts. Almost every page of history contradicts their assertions.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I must recall you to what you said about

the aggressiveness of despotisms. I was not satisfied with your statement. Surely it requires many modifications.

*Milverton.* I know it does. The character of the people ruled over by the despot varies the question immensely. A vain people is always aggressive. A vain man can always be induced to undertake any feat, which others, perhaps, would shrink from. If we had a vain man amongst us now, we could easily tempt him to vault over the back of this seat, especially if we pretended to believe that he could not do it. Whereas, a more solid fellow might say, "I daresay I could do it, but I do not care to distinguish myself in that way." I only contend that a despot will play more easily upon the vanity of such a nation than a government can, which has many checks in it, where there is much opportunity for discussion, and where the vanity of the nation may be divided and made to act in different directions, counteracting perhaps each other.

*Ellesmere.* You may say that despotisms are aggressive ; but you must own that free states are especially provocative. Consider what a perpetual provocation to war a free press gives. I believe that almost everybody feels the attacks in newspapers more than he pretends to feel them. You may say what you like, but it is a very ugly thing to be attacked in a publication which has innumerable readers, and which, from its ephemeral existence, cannot well be attacked again. Few persons are sufficiently masters of themselves to maintain a perfectly smooth temper on the days when they are so attacked. And, strange to say, large bodies of men seem almost as sensitive to attack as individuals are. A nation, not accustomed to a free press, can be driven into fury by the published comments of a neighbouring nation.

*Mr. Midhurst.* What Sir John says is very true. In my diplomatic career I have had opportunities of observing how keenly very exalted personages in foreign countries feel

about some article in an English newspaper which we should think nothing of.

*Milverton.* I cannot help that. I am very sorry for it. But, of course, we cannot give up the habit of free speaking and free writing to please or conciliate anybody. I will admit that great discretion should be used when we are speaking or writing of foreigners ; but this discretion must mainly be left to the individuals who speak or write. When a difference has arisen between two free nations, such as the Americans and ourselves, very unpleasant things are said and written, especially at first, on both sides. Then there comes a wiser and calmer discussion, both in newspapers and in public assemblages. The violence and the rancour are disowned ; and, somehow or other, without gagging our press or theirs, the disputes between the two nations have been very reasonably adjusted for many years. Admitting to the full the provocativeness inherent in a free press, I contend that the chief cure is to be found in the general extension of freedom of discussion throughout the world.

*Ellesmere.* Now, to turn to another part of the subject : you maintained somewhere or other that a mob was easier to deal with than a despot.

*Milverton.* I fully abide by what I said ; and I maintain that, unless the mob be a hired one, you can, with perseverance, get it to listen to nearly anything. It secretly likes a man who will stand up against it. It knows full well that no man wishes to thwart it ; that every orator loves cheers and not hisses : and when a man does utter unpleasant things in presence of a mob, every soul in the crowd is aware that the poor man is doing something which is against the grain, but which he feels to be a duty. It soon begins to sympathise with him a little, and generously inclines to give the full weight to arguments which are uttered in direct contradiction to its own prepossessions. What an

assemblage of men cannot abide is anything like trimming or shuffling. All men delight in clearness of thought and distinctness of expression. An orator who is subtle or hazy had better not address a mob.

*Ellesmere.* I think Milverton has made a very good defence for his dear mob. Now, turn to another point which he just touched upon, but did not follow out. He mentioned Charles the Fifth and his government, which, though despotic in form, was evidently, according to Milverton, tempered by something which made it tolerable in his eyes. I want to hear more from him on that subject. That is the advantage of these conversations. One is able to probe a man a little.

*Milverton.* Well, then, there was a freedom of access to men in power in those times which there is not in ours, and which tended to mitigate despotism. This freedom of access is prevented now by the complications of civilisation, which naturally lead to multiplicity of business. It is very hard now, even in the freest governments, for private persons (whatever good thing they may have to say) to obtain the means of saying it to men in power. They are obliged to have recourse to the press; and, in a despotic government, cannot obtain any hearing at all. But a simple monk could soon find his way to Charles the Fifth's presence. There were always plenty of people to tell Charles the Fifth what they thought of his sayings or doings. He had his Ellesmeres about him——

*Blanche.* Poor man!

*Milverton.* ——who did not fail to tell him all they thought, in language far from circumspect. I spoke of Titian's position towards the Monarch. Nobody could doubt that the position was full of freedom, who had once seen Titian's great picture of Charles the Fifth on horseback. It is the grandest picture of the kind I have ever beheld. Not one iota of flattery is there in it. There are

the falling jaw, the complexion full of disease, the scanty beard and worn countenance; yet withal you see that the Monarch is a great, valiant, cautious, melancholy, commanding man. It is a ghastly grand picture. It could only have been made by a free man, living, it may be, in a Court, but addressing courtiers who were accustomed to see, and to tell, the truth, and who did not wish their master to be painted other than he was. Such a picture could not be made by the Court painter of a despotic monarch, whose despotism was built upon democracy. The common people would not endure it.

*Ellesmere.* I will go to Madrid in my next long vacation. I never find, though, that any picture comes up to what you enthusiasts say about it.

*Dunsford.* I expected to hear Milverton descant upon the social evils attending upon despotism. I have always believed that luxury and extravagance flourish under despotic governments:—that “plain living and high thinking” are no more.

*Milverton.* I think so too. But I am afraid of exaggeration upon these points. I can imagine a despot of plain tastes and simple habits who should foster such tastes and habits amongst his people. I think there have been such despots. They have generally, I suppose, been warriors. But I suspect that the tendency of despotism is to foster luxury.

*Ellesmere.* If so, I suppose it is because people under such a government have fewer ways of amusing themselves.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Well, then, as to religion, Milverton?

*Milverton.* Sometimes despotism favours religion; sometimes it does not. One of the worst things about despotism is that it is so full of chance, and that it interrupts the natural current of thought and action.

I am now going to say something which Ellesmere will declare to be hazy, but which to me represents despotism

in its most alarming colours. It is, that the nature of despotic power is thoroughly misunderstood both by the despot himself and by all who contemplate him. I can best make clear to you what I mean by a quotation from Goethe's *Faust*. It is one of those passages written by a man of genius, of which, I suspect, the man of genius himself did not perceive the full depth of meaning, and the extent of all its consequences. It occurs when Mephistopheles is tempting Faust. Faust had been saying that it was in vain he tried to assume the universal feelings of mankind—that he must end at last,

“ Feeling within myself no added powers,  
Not by one hair's breadth higher than before,—  
As far as ever from the eternal nature !”

Then Mephistopheles replies,

“ You view the thing, good sir, as men view things :  
This must be made more clear, or we shall lose  
Life's pleasures—what, the vengeance—hands and feet,  
And head and heart, are thine, confessedly.  
But are the things which I command, enjoy,  
And use at will, the less to be called mine ?  
When I behold six horses at my service,  
Is not their strength, and speed, and vigour, mine ?  
I move as rapidly, and feel in truth,  
As if their four-and-twenty limbs were mine.”<sup>1</sup>

Now in that remarkable passage there is to be found the great delusion which besets men in despotic power, and those who regard them. It is very well for Mephistopheles to say that we possess that which we use ; but if we do not know how to use it, we do not, in the highest sense, possess it. It is true that the despot does drive these six horses ; but the question is whether his nature is of that power that

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<sup>1</sup> ANSTER'S *Faust*, p. 112.

it should drive those six horses ; whether it possesses the insight that might instruct him where to drive those horses to, or whether he is merely slashing and hurrying about, making a great noise and dust, and doing less or worse than nothing. The crowd looks on ; and it is charmed with all the noise, the prancing, and the curvetting. Even the sober and retired bystander is much imposed upon by all this pomp and seeming power. But mostly it comes to naught, and the delusion is broken up amidst the execrations of mankind, who find out at last that what a man pays for and drives, he may not be able in any right way to govern or direct.

Here Milverton rose, the discussion was broken up, and we walked away. As we went home, Ellesmere remarked to me; how skilful it was in Milverton to end where he did. "He was resolved to wind up with a crash, and not to give me any opportunity for weakening by comment the force of his last metaphor. He was right too. We are all deluded by the outward trappings and barbaric noise of despotism."



## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE FARM-YARD.

A COURTSHIP is a very interesting process to the persons principally concerned. It is also very amusing to the philosophic bystander. That flowery period spent in courtship is perhaps the only time in his life when a very shrewd man is often an utter dupe, and what is more, takes in himself about himself. Even Talleyrand probably deceived Talleyrand when he was courting, and imagined that he had a supreme disdain for all the pomps and vanities of the world. Thus I have heard Ellesmere speak, and now I have the advantage of seeing him in the position which he talked of. I myself think very differently about the matter from him, and believe that men and women then show forth all the highest possibilities of their nature, and have a tenderness and a tolerance for one other creature, and a power of abnegation for themselves, which if continued into ordinary life, would go far to make this world a heaven—at any rate something very different from what it is.

I do not mean to say that our two pairs of lovers were exceedingly altered during their time of courtship; for, indeed, what could alter Ellesmere much? He remained

the same brusque, comical, provoking, combative, affectionate kind of man that he ever was ; but the affectionateness prevailed over all the other qualities, and in it, as in a golden girdle, were set all the bright peculiarities of his nature. The women were less changed than the men. Speaking once to Ellesmere on the subject, he said, " You see they are always graceful impostors, and a little more or less of imposture is not much noticed in them." The chief difference in Milverton was that he became less abstract in his views of men and things, and was more inclined to speak cheerfully of all that came under his notice.

We proceeded homewards to England by easy journeys, and our lovers were too much interested in each other to give much time or thought to sight-seeing.

At length we were all at home again ; and the conversation which I am now going to record took place in Milverton's farm-yard a few days after our arrival. Milverton has had some rustic seats made there, which enjoy the shade of a large sycamore. There we sat, while the master explained to us the merits and peculiarities of the different animals. He thus began :

*Milverton.* Foreign travel is all very well, but there is a good deal in it that is like going to see a diorama. A wonderful picture is enrolled before you ; but you do not touch, handle, understand, or get to the meaning of most of it. It is very well to see Paul Potters, but I prefer my own real live cows that I know something about. Do you observe this dear little Alderney ? She is wishing to be

noticed. She is wondering that she is not noticed, but is too delicate and highbred to obtrude herself upon our attention. [Milverton then went up and fondled the cow, which for the greater part of this discussion remained close to us, ruminating sagaciously.] Now I want to show you that turkey. Turkeys do not bear a very high character for knowingness, or friendliness; but, as you see, this one is most familiar with the human race. She is also very gracious with other creatures; and it is one of the most comical sights to notice how all stray creatures seem to be aware of her benevolent nature. Forlorn chickens, solitary or maimed ducklings, bewildered little guinea-fowls, all find refuge with her, even when she has a brood of her own to take care of. They absolutely roost upon her while her own progeny is nestling under her. She is the Miss Nightingale of the farm-yard, or would be if Miss Nightingale were married, which I suppose would not check her sheltering benevolence of nature. The two things that one learns down here are great faith in the force of race, and withal a firm belief in the individuality of creatures. That last is the main thing. When we see how different each of these inferior creatures is from all the rest, we may form some little notion how different each one of us is from all the rest, though we pretend to be alike, and try to be alike, and make believe, even to ourselves, that we are alike. Trace up all intolerance and it comes mainly to this—that the intolerant person believes that other people are just like himself, or if not, that he must have them made so. They must be immediately cast into his mould, or he will know the reason why.

Then as to race: do you see that curiously speckled hen? She is of a very peculiar character, most tender to her own offspring, most malignant to the offspring of all other feathered creatures. So was her mother before her, and so, I suspect, will be one of her little ones that is exactly like

her now. My man is always urging me to get rid of the whole breed, to which I invariably reply, "Not till Mr. Buckle has seen them." He imagines Mr. Buckle to be a great poultry-fancier; but I allude to the ingenious, bold, and learned author of the *History of Civilisation*, who, in my judgment, makes too little of the effect of race; and I shall not be satisfied until I have had a long talk with him in this spot, and, with the aid of John, have illustrated my view of the subject, by commenting upon the nature of the cows, pigs, hens, and ducks, of this farm-yard. [Here John came and whispered something to his master.] No, John, this is Mr. Midhurst, and not the great poultry-fancier whom you are anxious to see.

*Ellesmere.* Forgive me for interrupting you, Milverton; but what is that diabolic noise I hear? It is not in the farm-yard, but it comes from a few fields off.

*Milverton.* Oh, that is "Puffing Billy," for so we rustics hereabouts name the steam threshing-machine. It is an odious noise. All my household declare that it gives them headaches; and as for me, who hate all noises, even the twittering of birds, you can imagine what objurgations, not couched in the most mild or repeatable language, I have uttered against that obstreperous monster. But I have something very remarkable to tell you about it, an acoustical problem, which only Professor Willis, or some other great *savant*, will be able to solve. I have certainly observed that when "Puffing Billy" is threshing my own corn, the noise appears quite different from what it does at other times, and I am not nearly so much relieved when "Puffing Billy" leaves off and takes his departure. This of course must arise from some difference in the corn. I shall put the point to the Professor, if I get an opportunity, when I go next to Cambridge.

But there are many things that one learns from living in the country. You know what a dislike I have to much

walking, and that to take a "constitutional" appears to me one of the most vague, foolish, and disagreeable operations possible. Now I have observed that I can always walk farther to the East than to the West, starting from my study door. Of course there may be very grand reasons for this. Nation's move westward; but the tendency of individuals, perhaps, is to move eastward: or shall we say that this particular individual, from a certain melancholy in his nature, is always willing to avoid the declining aspect of the day, and turns for ever to the east for renewed hope and consolation? That ill-natured Ellesmere, who takes the lowest, or, as he calls it, the most practical view of everything, will be sure to remark that my few fields lie towards the east, and that I can walk well enough in them, though I am overcome by instant fatigue in other people's ground. To which I reply, If not a rose, I have lived with roses: if not a philosopher, I have lived with philosophers, such as Ellesmere, Dunsford, and Midhurst, not to speak of Blanche and Mildred; and is it likely that such trumpery influences as those of property should subdue a man who has spent so much time in such great company?

*Ellesmere.* Of all humbugs, the philosopher is not the least.

*Dunsford.* How prettily it was said some time ago in an article on Country Houses in *Fraser's Magazine*, "The enjoyment of all things beyond eating and drinking arises out of our idealising them. Do you think that a child who will spend an hour delightedly in galloping round the garden on his horse, which horse is a stick, regards that stick as the mere bit of wood? No: that stick is to him instinct with imaginings of a pony's pattering feet and shaggy mane, and erect little ears. It is not so long since the writer was accustomed to ride on horseback in that inexpensive fashion, but what he can remember all that the stick was; and remember, too, how sometimes fancy would flag, the idealising power would break down, and from being a horse the

stick became merely a stick, a dull, wearisome, stupid thing.”<sup>1</sup>

*Ellesmere.* It is very pretty, but I do not see how it applies.

*Dunsford.* Why, I was thinking of the ideal value which each man has for what belongs to him.

*Milverton.* I knew an old lady who really believed that her money was worth more than other people’s money; and, if she gave five pounds to any of her nephews or nieces, she always considered that it was equal to six pounds ten shillings at least of ordinary people’s money. Her pounds, which she had saved with great care, were not common pounds; and she thought they would go farther. Most of us are a little like the old lady.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I know you all think me a gloomy man, but I must venture to tell you that the aspect of all these animals only impresses me——

*Ellesmere.* Now he is going to say something about eating.

*Mr. Midhurst.* No, he is not——only impresses me with a sense of the pain, weariness, and travail, of all created things. Here are creatures, many of them, according to the philosophic Milverton, with exquisite natures; and what does it all come to? A good deal of distress while they are alive, and negation, according to our theories, when they are dead. Now look at that creature’s eye. It has the painful anxious appearance of that of a sick man.

*Milverton.* You are right. That creature is suffering from something the matter with its teeth. It is getting better though.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I shall never forget how much I was impressed at hearing that horses suffer from the torturing disease, the stone. To be sure men are more profoundly,

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<sup>1</sup> *Fraser’s Magazine*, p. 696. Dec. 1858.

consistently, ludicrously miserable than any other animals ; but then——

*Milverton.* You know the saying of Pascal, Mr. Midhurst, —that if man is miserable, at least he is great in knowing that he *is* miserable. I remember some of his words, "*Ainsi toutes ses misères prouvent sa grandeur. Ce sont misères de grand seigneur.*"

*Mr. Midhurst.* Oh, if you come to Pascal, there indeed I have an ally. Does he not say, that we never enjoy the present, because we are always thinking of the future, or the past ?

*Ellesmere.* What of that ? Somehow a man gets enjoyment. The faces of men give us a truer insight into what passes in their minds than all the maxims of all the philosophers in the world. On those faces, though there are lines of chagrin and furrows of anxiety, there are also pleasant curves and marks and dimples which show that thousands of agreeable emotions have passed through their minds. Even in the grave Milverton's face I can discern that he has been laughing half his time—secretly of course—at his own follies and those of the rest of the world. It is very little discomfort to me to have it proved to me, that I am always thinking of the past or of the future, if somehow or other I contrive to get a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure out of my thoughts.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Ah, do you recollect that grand passage in Pascal, where he compares us all to a set of slaves in chains, condemned to death, who see a certain number of their comrades killed before their eyes each day, and who, looking at each other, without any hope, in misery await their turn of destruction ?

*Milverton.* The same idea has been much better expressed elsewhere.

*Ellesmere.* Mr. Midhurst and his gloomy friend Pascal are getting the unkindest treatment from us to-day.

*Milverton.* I cannot recollect the author, or the exact passage; but some man has compared the condition of men to that of a set of dancers (not galley-slaves, you will observe); and, every now and then, as they go on dancing, some disappear through the flooring; but still the dance goes on.

There is also in *Don Quixote* a very apt comparison found for the condition of human life by Sancho Panza. Don Quixote, in his noble language, had been telling Sancho how like human life is to a play. One takes the part of a ruffian, another of a liar, a third of a merchant, a fourth of a soldier. This man is for the occasion the lover: that man is the judicious friend. At last the play is ended. Each takes off the clothes which belong to his part, and the players remain equal. So it is in the comedy of this world, says Don Quixote. There are emperors and popes, and all the characters that can be introduced into a play; but when it is played out, death takes away the outward trappings which made them seem to differ, and they remain equal in the tomb. "An excellent comparison," said Sancho, "although not so new that I have not heard it many and different times, as likewise that comparison of life to a game of chess,—that while the game lasts, each piece has its particular office: and, when the game is finished, all the pieces are mingled and huddled and shuffled together; and they put them into a bag, which is like the ending of life in the grave."<sup>1</sup>

*Ellesmere.* All these similes are very unsatisfactory things, but those that Milverton has brought forward are less unlike

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<sup>1</sup> "Brava comparacion ! dixo Sancho, aunque no tan nueva, que yo no la haya oido muchas y diversas veces, como aquella del juego del axedrez, que mientras dura el juego cada pieza tiene su particular oficio, y en acabándose el juego, todas se mezclan, juntan y baraxan, y dan con ellas en una bolsa, que es como dar con la vida en la sepultura."—*Don Quixote*, parte segunda, l. v. c. 12.



the truth than that of Pascal : and as for Sancho Panza's, it is the best of the whole lot. None of them come up to Shakspeare's.

“ It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.”

How, in the old times of coaching, one has been encountered, on a change of horses, by the village idiot, with large tongue obstreperously telling one something of which one could not make out a single word ; one supposed it must mean begging, gave him something, and got into the coach again, not the merrier for having seen him. But his story was our own life.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Lamennais, in his *Paroles d'un Croyant*, gives a fine image of what man is like, as long as he is in the flesh. “ *Sous cette enveloppe épaisse du corps, vous ressemblez à un voyageur qui, la nuit dans sa tente, voit ou croit voir des fantômes passer.*”

*Ellesmere.* Grand but vague.

*Milverton.* To me, in a strange inexplicable way, music serves to explain everything. They say there is nothing so unlike real life as an Italian opera ; but I find in it the very image and semblance of life. Now a grand recitative : now the wailing, or the joyous shouting, of a chorus. Prominently forward on the scene come the passions. They may be ever so tragic, ever so lugubrious, ever so sordid ; but the terror and the grief and the sordidness are enwrapt in divine harmonies ; and it is in vain that you make the story ever so miserable, the beauty of the music perpetually conquers it, and disdains to be held in the mean bonds of an ignoble affliction. So, in contemplating the Universe, when we see the exact obedience to number and to weight, and the exquisite co-ordination of forces, according to which all things move, it partly soothes, partly submerges, all present, all individual suffering ; and the

sense of power, of power so great that you feel it must be beneficent, enfolds you in a supernatural security, leaving no room, while this music of order is resounding in your ears, for untrusting sorrow, or mean grief, to enter. This is what the ancients fabled, and what laborious modern research for ever continues to unfold—the true music of the spheres.

*Mr. Midhurst.* You talk very gorgeously and very glibly, Milverton, about the harmony of creation, and about everything proceeding according to number and to weight; but it is the very definiteness of this number and weight, and the very rigidity of the laws of the universe which occasionally impress me with the gloomiest thoughts.

Now I will take an instance of what I mean—a very humble instance—which has just occurred to me, while glancing over your farm-yard.

A beautiful thing is the incubative, the prematernal instinct. That duck which is now waddling along so ungracefully towards the pond, is an admirable incubator, we will suppose. She has eleven eggs put under her. Who shall tell the labours, anxieties, troubles, and sufferings which that poor creature undergoes during the five weeks of incubation? She starves herself, she neglects to waddle down to that dirty pond so dear to her. Her feathers come off, and she is bare to the skin at the part where she is with difficulty covering all the eggs (you see, Milverton, I have watched the ways of farm-yard creatures as well as you); but, unfortunately, in this case that I am imagining, ten out of the eleven eggs that she is sitting upon are addled, and what is more, were addled from the first. The law of their addlement proceeds with adamantine rigour. The law again upon which her incubative instinct proceeds is not a whit abated on account of the infelicitous termination which is sure to consummate her labours.

Now, in my foolish, ignorant way, I could not but wish a little relaxation of the law in this case.

To proceed with the history of my unfortunate duck. At the end of the five weeks one duckling is produced, which is immediately taken away from the poor mother, and added to a large and vigorous brood.

*Ellesmere.* Good Heavens, how like it is to human life ! Most of us begin by sitting diligently upon ten or eleven great schemes of life, the greater part of which are inevitably addled from the first moment of incubation. A man means to be great, powerful, rich, to bring plenty to his home, joy to his parents, and amongst other things to be a signal benefactor to mankind. He also condescends to have two or three other projects, not very large ones ; such as to dance well, to play at cricket tolerably, or to ascertain how to brew small beer. He does not succeed in the greater projects. He does not become powerful or rich, or bring plenty to his home, or singular joy to his parents. These were addled schemes from the first ; but perhaps the one egg does turn out rightly, and he dances pretty well, as I do, or plays at cricket judiciously, as Walter and I play,—or, after much toil, he does succeed in brewing small beer tolerably.

*Milverton.* Am I to answer all this gravely ? Do you really want, Mr. Midhurst, to have perpetual disturbance of the laws of nature ?

*Dunsford.* At any rate this is one of the beautiful considerations connected with miracles, that they furnish to devout men the conviction that the rigidity of the laws of nature may be broken for high purposes.

*Mr. Midhurst.* It is no good continuing the controversy. It is all a question of temperament. Men of sanguine temperament can see, or rather feel, these things as you do, Milverton ; but I fail to perceive them in any such joyous or resigned fashion.

*Ellesmere.* As for my part, I am willing to believe in this music of the spheres that Milverton speaks so loftily

about ; but I would always rather hear him condescend to lower topics, such as drainage, or whitewashing ; or that he would give us an account, which he could do with just as much eloquence, of the probable rise or fall in prices, and of how one might invest one's money to the best advantage. [Here he laid his hand upon Mildred, who gave it, I believe, a sharp pinch.] Do not be so severely conjugal, Mildred ; I am not your slave yet. Oh, of course, any fine talk about the music of the spheres, and about everything being all right, and harmony prevailing over disorder, always carries away women.

*Blanche.* I am sure all that Leonard says is quite right. I have felt it myself, only I have not been able to say so.

*Ellesmere.* Oh then, undoubtedly, it must be true. Dunsford is on that side, too, I can see.

*Dunsford.* Yes, Ellesmere, an assured hope, beyond all power of defining or even of expressing, prevails in my mind over all other considerations ; and I am not to be persuaded (even if obliged to content myself with the low grounds of natural religion) that man is the poor uncared-for creature that you from your love of opposition, Mr Midhurst from his persevering love of what is dismal, and Pascal from his melancholy, would persuade us. Besides, if I recollect rightly, the said Pascal remarks, how dangerous it is to make a man see his resemblance to the beasts that perish without showing him at the same time his especial grandeur.<sup>1</sup>

*Milverton.* I am not in the least daunted or discomposed by Ellesmere's ridicule. Indeed he generally begins by

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<sup>1</sup> "Il est dangereux de trop faire voir à l'homme combien il est égal aux bêtes, sans lui montrer sa grandeur. Il est encore dangereux de lui faire trop voir sa grandeur sans sa bassesse. Il est encore plus dangereux de lui laisser ignorer l'un et l'autre. Mais il est très avantageux de lui représenter l'un et l'autre."—*Pensées.*

ridiculing that which he secretly believes. Even in contemplating this world's affairs, I think we have every ground for hopefulness. I believe that a feeling of pity is rising slowly in the heart of man as the dew upon Mount Hermon, to which the Psalmist likens the happy state of those brethren who "dwell together in unity,"—a pity compared with which all that mankind has yet known of pity will seem hardness of heart; that will take the deepest heed of all the difficulties which the more obscure part of the human race has hitherto had to encounter; that will permeate society from the highest to the lowest; that will never rest until it finds some cure for whatever can be cured in human affairs; that will bury in oblivion what should be buried in oblivion; that will try to render all occupations tolerable and to some extent beautiful; and that will make universal brotherhood something more than a name. To expect that great results of this kind will come without signal and most alarming interruptions, and without most perplexing drawbacks, would be Utopian. A tidal movement of the kind I mean is not easily to be perceived in any one generation; but still I think some intimations of its commencement are perceptible in ours.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Has freedom then advanced of late? A little time ago you had something to say against despotism.

*Ellesmere.* Has slavery been quelled of late?

*Milverton.* I will answer your question first, Ellesmere. There may be some ugly difficulties at present in the way of anti-slavery. But now, consider. You are a man in the prime of life. When you were a youth, our great experiment of freeing our own slaves was commenced. I contend that that immense experiment has been signally successful.

*Ellesmere.* For whom?

*Milverton.* For the slaves themselves, and also for the world in general. If, instead of talking at random about

this matter, you would carefully go into details, you would find that for the most part my words are amply borne out—that the evils which were liberally prophesied have not come to pass; that the West India Islands have not fallen into barbarism; that the negro population has not been diminished; that Europe has not been deprived of West India products; and that, in short, an experiment, which no statesman could have imagined to be without considerable hazard, has proved not merely innocuous, but extensively beneficial to the world.

Now, to answer Mr. Midhurst. Have you ever considered, Mr. Midhurst, what a large thing freedom is? It is not a very easy transaction to set a bird free judiciously—Blanche's canary-bird, for instance; and some preparation is necessary before you can turn a horse out to pasture that has been months in the stable. I admit that there is some retrogression as regards freedom in certain nations of Europe. In others, mark you, there is manifest advance—in Russia, Prussia, and Sardinia,<sup>1</sup> for example. But even in other nations retrogression is more apparent than real; and what there is of it that is real, may be compared to one of those backward movements of the tide which precede the great advance of a bounding wave upon the shore. Every age is full of fright at its own peculiar disasters, of disgust at its own peculiar shortcomings, of sad apprehensions for the future of the human race. The historian is accustomed to these things. In any age, however, there are but few historians; and they cannot do much to comfort and reassure the world. But if you will ask any man who has taken a large survey of present human affairs and of past history, whether he sees any just cause for apprehension with regard to human liberty taken generally, I

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<sup>1</sup> I do not know what Milverton would say now; but I think he would probably abide by what he said on this occasion.

think, unless he be a man of a very gloomy and desponding nature, that he will unhesitatingly answer, No.

*Ellesmere.* The men who write big books of history are so intent upon oppressing mankind in their own way, that they do not take notice of the progress of other despotisms ; and indeed their own is so great that all others dwindle into smallness when compared with it.

*Milverton.* You are driven into jesting, Ellesmere ; and you see that you have no other way of appearing to answer me, for you must feel with me that the contemplation of what has been done during the last fifty years leaves little ground for regret, repining, or despondency.

Milverton rose from his seat ; we followed him : and there was no more talk except about trivial things, while we remained in the farm-yard.

## CHAPTER XX.

CHIEFLY SHOWING THE NEED FOR  
TOLERANCE.

AFTER we had visited the farm we went for a walk to the Downs; and, as the conversation there was I think very interesting, I have reserved it for a separate and final chapter. It began thus. We had been talking about riches, and Milverton took up the conversation in the following words:—

*Milverton.* Of course it is a great thing that a state should be wealthy; but I think that, as individuals, we ought to do everything to resist the influence of riches.

*Ellesmere.* What do you mean?

*Milverton.* We should resist their influence in political matters. We should resist their influence socially. We should resist their influence upon our individual selves. I remember a fine lady once saying to me: "It is the fashion, Mr. Milverton, this year, to be poor." I could not help thinking what an admirable fashion it would be. I must confess I have always had a sort of regard for fashion, because it is one of those powers that may set itself up against the tyranny of riches or any other tyranny.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Very true. I believe that you might make it fashionable to break off many habits that lead to comfortable expense. Suppose it were fashionable now to be waited



upon by women instead of by men, what an excellent saving there would be.

*Dunsford.* Anything that should induce men to look, not merely at the fact of worldly success, but at the means by which it has been acquired, and to estimate men more according to that, would be an immense gain to the world.

*Ellesmere.* Quite Utopian, my dear friend! Do let us abide within the precincts of common sense and common feeling.

*Milverton.* I will tell you, Ellesmere, what is not Utopian, and that is, to effect such an improvement in the condition of the poor as to make men less anxious to avoid that condition by any means, whether righteous or unrighteous. That, in my opinion, should be the great object of a state.

*Ellesmere.* You men of letters, being generally distressed, extravagant, thoughtless beings, having always much to say against the acquisition of riches.

*Milverton.* I have intended several times, Ellesmere, to answer you when you have been sneering against men of letters; and I will take this occasion of doing so. I shall begin by quoting to you a remark of the present Lord Grey, which I have quoted before, but which cannot be too much impressed upon you. I happened to hear him make it in a speech in the House of Commons, when he was Lord Howick. The point in discussion was the fraudulent nature of a certain class of men. I think they were a class of merchants; but I have forgotten the particulars of the question that was before Parliament. The substance of his remark was, "Never indulge in much condemnation of a class of men. If you find that they are worse, in any respect, than the average of other men, you may be sure that in that respect they are subject to peculiar influences of evil." The remark has a very wide scope.

Now look how it applies to literary men. Is there any class in the world who are liable to more disturbing and

injurious influences? Consider the irregularity of payment to them for their work. See how they are at the mercy of public events. There comes a war, or a change of ministry, or a dissolution of parliament, or a disastrous scarcity of food, or a convulsion in the money market. The men who feel the pressure first are men of letters. Literary men in troublous times are like a company of poor players who have set themselves down, unwittingly, in some country town, where the Mayor is serious and the principal clergyman hyper-serious: and the players blow their trumpets in vain, for few above the rabble come to hear them. Even the boys belonging to serious families pass lingeringly by. The market is as unfit for such wares as a West India island for a consignment of skates. So, in literature, a poor fellow has prepared something, with great labour, which is to win him a few hundred pounds; and then comes one of these public disasters. His publisher tells him, the public will not attend to anything now in the way of literature; and that the publication of his work must be put off for some months. Conceive what this putting off may be to that poor man! Then compare with such a precarious pursuit the occupations of most other men. These are not so much at the mercy of public events. Often, whether the men are ill or well, their money comes in. People do not get tired of law, physic, or divinity,—still less of meat and clothing. Those who have chosen a line to work upon which is a common line, get on by natural circumstances, and, if I may say so, inevitably. There is often no need with them for that perpetually renewed struggle which belongs to men of letters.

Then consider what an exhausting occupation theirs is—exhausting, I mean, to the nervous system; and do not wonder if they have recourse to all kinds of excitement to make up for this exhaustion. Great statesmen are proverbially large eaters. It proceeds from the same cause.

Then turn to another branch of the subject. There are no people who are so much courted by society as men of letters. There are no people who are so extensively liable to intrusion. All this may prevent a wise attention to their own affairs. Take the highest instances. The Duke of Wellington, I have no doubt, suffered a great deal from intrusion, but not so much as Sir Walter Scott did.

These considerations make it desirable that there should be very few of such persons as men of letters, and, if you like, Ellesmere, that they should be put to death early. If we lived in a "New Atlantis," you might be one of the "Fathers of Solomon's House," perhaps the one so beautifully described by Bacon. "He was a man of middle stature and age, comely of person, and had an aspect as if he pitied men." And to you might be entrusted the duty of destroying nascent men of letters. At present here they are in considerable numbers: and I think a little sympathy might not be ill expended upon them. It is easy to say that they might change their occupation; but who, in middle life (and that is the time when they find out these things), can change his occupation? If they are at all proficient in their art, they must have given a great deal of labour to it. You must admit that the power of writing is not attained without exceeding carefulness. How few can say a thing as it ought to be said! All of us try—bishops, judges, statesmen, diplomatists; but not many men in any generation can make a clear statement, or write anything well.

Again, look at the amount of criticism these men of letters have to bear up against. It is an odd idea of mine, but I always say that if the prime elements of life supplied to London—the water, and the bread, and the air—had been half as much criticised as the books that appear there, we should long ago have made a great advance in longevity.

The most cruel thing, too, is that an author's, or an artist's past works are often his greatest enemies. Every

witling is ready to remark that an author is falling off, and that the trick of his writing is found out.

I sometimes think with sadness that there must come a time for men of letters, even for the most eminent of them, when, unless they are very sensible and contented men, they must have somewhat galling reflections in contemplating the careers of other men as contrasted with their own. They see those whom they remember stupid boys at school with them, or at any rate second-rate boys ; and these boys are now thriving merchants, deans, archdeacons, bishops, commissioners, judges, or general officers. They have profited by routine, and have "got on," as it is called ; and their advance is secure. Whereas the man of letters has to make this year the same effort that he has made for the last fifteen years perhaps,—under disadvantageous circumstances too, for the world is beginning to get tired of him ; and, according to adverse critics, has found out his ways. The doctor gives the dose which, after some years' practice, he has made up his mind to be the right thing for the particular disorder he is treating : the clergyman has completed his stock of sermons, and shut up his views upon theology : the merchant, or the trader, or the solicitor, has set his business well on foot by this time ; and, in the main, it goes trippingly, without any more excessive trouble on his part. These men have not, each year, to make a new stride in thought, if they would maintain their position. Yet this is the fate of men of letters.

Remember how few prizes there are for these men ! Time was, when they were occasionally chosen for appointments, when they were selected as the secretaries to embassies, or even as ambassadors and secretaries of state ; but that has gone by, and routine has mostly pushed them out of every path but their own.

I am fully willing to allow that these considerations should make men very careful of entering upon a literary career.

I think I would rather see Walter enduring a great illness than commencing the career of a mere man of letters. But let us have some sympathy for those people who are already in such a career, and who cannot well get out of it.

I may say these things, perhaps not ungracefully, as not belonging altogether to that class, being by nature a man of business, and having, for some of the best years of my life, been employed in pursuits far removed from literature; but I often feel, Ellesmere (for these remarks are addressed to you), that you speak somewhat unkindly of men of letters, and so I have made this preachment to you.

*Ellesmere.* Really, my dear fellow, I did not mean any harm. I only said what I did say to provoke you to make a defence; and I am sure you have made a very good one. You would not find me, if I were in power, insensible to the claims of literature.

*Dunsford.* We ought to be very grateful to those who amuse or instruct us.

*Milverton.* You must own that I did not talk any of the nonsense that is sometimes talked about men of letters. I do not think that they are underrated in a social point of view. On the contrary, it appears to me that hardly any men are so well received in society as they are, and therein lies a great temptation for them.

*Ellesmere.* Let us change the subject. I assure you, Milverton, I did not mean to say anything unkind.

But now, as we shall not see one another for some time, and as I observe you all take opportunities in conversation of strengthening the views that you have advocated in writing—as Mr. Midhurst is always touching up his essay on Human Misery, Milverton his essay on War; and Dunsford his discourse on Pleasantness, if not in words at least by his behaviour [here I was obliged to make a very low bow]—I wish to say something which has been in my mind for the last three weeks with regard to my essay on

the "Arts of Self-advancement." I think you will admit that my new idea is not to be despised. I confess that I took up that subject of self-advancement somewhat jestingly. But I have been led to consider it a great deal since I wrote upon it. I begin to find how true is the remark, that one never acquires clear ideas about a thing until one has to make a statement in speech or writing about it. I believe that since writing that essay I have discovered one of the great elements of success in life, which had hitherto quite escaped my attention. I am thoroughly serious now in what I am going to say.

This great element is exaggeration. A man becomes notable, not from the justness and accuracy of his thoughts, but from their vividness and from the strength with which he expresses them. One-sided men prevail. Look at the Bar. It is the unmeasured advocacy which makes itself conspicuous. In politics there is the same thing. A forcible man takes up a one-sided view and advocates it with the greatest exaggeration. Forthwith he becomes notable. If he is a man of action rather than of speech, you will observe that, for his mode of acting to be successful, there must be a want of measure in it. In literature the same law is visible. It is not the just and cautious historian for whose works there will be an inordinate demand, but some writer who paints his characters with untruthful force, with unhesitating clearness, and with abundant exaggeration. He must not, like poor Southey, meditate a whole morning about the justness of a particular epithet. In other kinds of writing the same principle holds good. I do not say that for permanent reputation justice is not one of the first requisites ; but I was speaking solely of success in life, which is a very brief affair.

There are many reasons why this exaggeration ensures success. It is easy work : it at once gains attention : it saves thought both on the part of the writer and the reader,

of the speaker and the hearer, of the actor and the observer. I come back to my old argument about time. There is not time in the world to listen to just people. Justice is encumbered by doubts, reservations, subtleties, and explanations. Justice is parenthetical and tiresome. Justice, in fine, is not a good advertisement. Men are so apathetic that their attention must be roused by what is striking and unmeasured. There is a dash of caricature in almost everything that is immediately successful. In addressing such men as you, I need not worry the subject any more. You must see at once what I mean : and do you not admit that there is a great deal in it ?

*Milverton.* There certainly is.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I do not quite see what you mean when you apply your principle to men of action.

*Ellesmere.* Perhaps I ought to have varied the expression. Men of action succeed by an unwarrantable boldness which corresponds with exaggeration in writers and speakers. Take the careers of many of the most prominent men, and you will understand what I mean. You will see how unmeasured and improbable have often been their expectations ; and yet their boldness has carried those expectations into reality. In one or two of the most remarkable examples in this age, you might almost say that the expectations of these men have been nearly akin to madness. But their expectations have been successfully realised. It is wonderful what a man can do who will not perceive obstacles.

However, I must own that I am stronger when I keep strictly to my main point, that exaggeration of expression is one of the greatest means of success.

*Dunsford.* How does this apply to my profession ?

*Ellesmere.* In the most absolute manner. Is it by holding very temperate views that men in your profession succeed ? Is it not by being notable members of a party ? And that brings me to another branch of the subject. By exaggera-

tion you attach a party to you. You become one of the prominent men in it. You enjoy in your own proper person a considerable part of the force which belongs to that party. Mind again, there is a time when justice may be very useful ; but it is when you have attained a high position. The brilliant advocate, when he becomes a judge, requires another sort of nature. The eminent High or Low Churchman, when he becomes a bishop, must know how to rule justly men of various opinions in the church. The great leader of a party must have a fairness and discretion that might have hindered his rising. Even the remarkable man of letters, when he has gained the world's attention, would secure it, perhaps, for ages, if he could write fairly and justly. Critical persons begin to observe the great man's writings, and frequently, after he has gained this height, it is a continued decadence for him in the minds of thoughtful men. For, after all, it is only real worth that ultimately prevails. But hardly in this life, and it is present success that I am speaking of.

*Mr. Midhurst.* The proposition that Ellesmere has just been working out would have been a very valuable addition to his essay. How it goes to prove my views ! What a melancholy thing it is that men are to rise into notice through some defect of character. Some time ago Milverton alluded to Pope Celestine the Fifth. I wonder whether you know that he is the Pope whom it is said Dante alludes to in those lines, where he speaks of "the great refusal,"

" Guardai, e vidi l' ombra di colui  
Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto."

You see even Dante scorns the man who refused power and dignity. If a man rises to place and power by something which may be called "*il gran tradimento*," the great betrayal ; that is often quite forgotten.

*Milverton.* No: not forgotten. Treachery may be success-



ful; but there is an immense retribution in the loss of esteem on the part of those whose opinion is best worth having. Did you ever see a little poem of Browning's called *The Lost Leader*?

*Mr. Midhurst.* No.

*Milverton.*

“Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in his coat.”

And then afterwards it describes the party he had deserted.

“We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die.”

I cannot remember the rest accurately; but the poem tells how they, the deserted, will go on doing their work, fighting their battle, not regarding him, “the lost leader,” with anger, but with unutterable sorrow; and even if he returns to them, there will be

“The glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again.”

This happens to be a poem of a purely local kind, applying to English politics; but the spirit of it is universal. You talk of success: what success can compensate for being so sorrowed over? And frequently the man himself is the one who sorrows most over himself: who knows and feels what he might have been.

*Mr. Midhurst.* I will not dwell upon these subjects. I have no supporter here. I will turn to something else. Both Milverton and Ellesmere have chosen their topics for conversation during this walk. Now there is one that I want to hear discussed. We began talking about it at the farm-yard, but it was treated in a cursory manner. It is the question of race. What have you got, Milverton, to

say about it? In the absence of the remarkable writer whose views, when at the farm, you opposed, you had it all your own way. I, too, having seen many of the principal races of the world, have some opinions on the subject. But I should like first to hear yours.

*Ellesmere.* I should like to hear them too. I believe Mr. Midhurst asks for them solely because he wants to sit down. So let us seat ourselves on the dry bank of this muddy sheep-pond, which I daresay Milverton admires very much; and let us pass in review the various races of mankind, beginning with Caucasians and ending with those people who believe in the perfectibility of man being obtained through the medium of large armies. That must be a race very low down in the scale.

*Milverton.* Are you prepared to listen for a few minutes to what I should say upon race? It is a subject which I cannot treat less briefly; and I must not be interrupted at every point by Ellesmere, if I am to endeavour to give you anything like a view of my opinions on the matter.

*Ellesmere.* I will promise not to interrupt.

*Dunsford.* It is impossible to discuss such a question in a short, sharp, conversational method.

*Ellesmere.* I am quite aware of that, Dunsford. Milverton may proceed with a perfect assurance that I shall behave properly.

*Milverton.* In the first place you will admit that there are apparently great differences of race. A negro is a very different creature from a pure Caucasian; and, without going into these extremes, you must admit that a Celt is a very different creature from a Saxon, and will act differently under the same circumstances.

It is however maintained, and with a great deal of sagacity, that all mankind may be traced back to one race. Many of the most eminent men of science agree with theologians upon this point. I might cite several illustrious

names; but you will be content to take my word for the fact.

You come then to the point of what is the cause, or what are the causes, of these differences. Here then we may admit, if we like, that the causes are to be found in certain differences of climate, food, aspects of nature—and circumstances of every variety and description connected with locality,—for I think it unwise to limit ourselves to the three sets of circumstances first named.

Now comes the point at which I wish to diverge from many thinkers and writers on this subject. They would say: You admit that these circumstances have caused the differences in race. What then need we say more about the matter? I beg to remark, however, on the other hand, that these influences of climate, food, soil, etc., have been translated as it were into a change of tissue, and expressed in life. I must dwell upon this point more. These influences, to which we have alluded, have become hardened and set in different branches of the human family; have taken form, as it were—are henceforth generated. From that moment those influences may cease to produce their full effect; they have established something which may tend to counteract them. Take, for instance, the woolly hair and peculiar skin of the negro. These phenomena might have been produced by peculiarities of climate, soil, and food, or, as I would rather say generally, by peculiarities of condition,—but thenceforward they are expressed in a new nature, which may tend to counteract, nay, which does tend to counteract, the effect of this peculiar condition. I maintain, therefore, that it is unphilosophical, and likely to lead to great error, if we persist in ignoring the effects of race, and merely referring all the varied phenomena that we see to those circumstances and influences which may have produced (mark you, it is only *may have*) these changes in the human structure, but which are

now expressed in new, or at least in modified forms of being.

Of course everything that we see may probably be referred to a few simple laws of immense applicability. The progress of all philosophy is leading us to that conclusion. The elementary materials of the world are being gradually found to be fewer and fewer. The action of these materials is found to depend upon few laws. A crystal seeks to cure itself of injury somewhat after the fashion that an injured part of the human body does. I admit all this; but still I contend that, in considering the affairs of this world, which, after all, we have but a small portion of time to work upon, it is wise to recognise those differences of race which have been to a certain extent consummated, as independent facts. It may be well, therefore, for a physical philosopher to refer all the varieties of being which he sees around him to a few laws, such as those of light and heat and electricity (which perhaps are but one law); but it is unwise for a philosophic historian to do otherwise than recognise the existence of the laws of race, which, for the limited time of which he is treating, are all-important for him. Dr. Prichard may have been able to show that there is good ground for believing that French nature has been made to differ from English nature by certain physical circumstances; but the practical man of the world had better study the immense difference that does exist between these races, which will make them act very differently under the same circumstances.

Words, for instance, set in the shape of phrases, do not go so deep down into an Englishman as into a Frenchman. Historical writers, who discuss the great French Revolution, often seem to me to forget the difference of race. They talk as if the same grievances would have produced the same results in any other nation.

*Ellesmere.* Ah, it was a sad omission of mine not bring-

ing up the French Revolution, when we were discussing despotism.

*Milverton.* It would not have affected my views. That revolution is, doubtless, the most remarkable thing that has occurred in profane history. No man is quite the same after having read an account of it, even the most meagre account, as he was before. But I suppose what you mean to insinuate is, that it furnishes an instance of a mob being more difficult to deal with than a despot. I cannot agree with you. The commanding men were not on the side that we could wish to have seen them. Danton did not discourage the September massacres. Had there been good and great men "to the fore," as the Irish say, they would have had immense influence, I think. But what I mentioned the French Revolution for, was to indicate the difference of race. Both the good points and the bad points in the French character tended greatly to make that revolution what it was. The English could not have been worked up to that height of hope and dream of universal brotherhood, by which the French were frenzied. As I said before, phrases do not penetrate deeply into our nature. We are too cool and impassive for that to happen. Neither does neatness of expression affect us much.

Again, in considering Ireland and the Irish I have always been very much struck by the effect of race. You have a climate there which, from its moistness, would, I believe, affect the spirits of any other race, certainly of the Anglo-Saxon: but in Ireland you have the gayest people in the world. It is in vain that it rains all day, day after day, in the west or south-west of Ireland. The Irishman is not to be daunted by that, but is as gay and pleasant as if he basked in Neapolitan sunshine.

*Mr. Midhurst.* These are exactly my sentiments. I have only had to deal with human beings as a diplomatist, and not as a physical philosopher who pretended to know

or who cared to know anything about their tissues. With every man I have had to deal I have kept well in mind the race from which he sprang, and have found it very serviceable to do so.

*Ellesmere.* I, too, agree with Milverton as far as he has gone. I have not had to deal much with men of different races, but only with men of different characters; and I think as much of character as you do of race. Indeed it is the favourite subject of my thoughts.

*Dunsford.* Now then we will hear Ellesmere discourse upon character; and we will be as patient as we were in listening to Milverton upon race.

*Ellesmere.* Well, I go very far in my speculations on the subject, and incline to believe that wherever life enters, even in the lowest forms, there are the rudiments of individual character. All, therefore, that Milverton said in the farm-yard on that head fitted very well into my notions upon the subject.

To pass, however, from the brute creation up to man. You see two commonplace men, belonging to the same class, born and bred in the same circumstances, and moving together pretty well as members of a class. You think they are as much alike as one oyster is to another (both oysters being without the disease of pearl-breeding); but should you come to know these two men intimately well, you often find that there are gulfs of difference between them. In fact you find that there is not anybody who is commonplace. I cannot help thinking of what Dunsford used to teach us at College: that there are infinitely small quantities which yet differ from each other infinitely—different orders of infinitesimals, he used to call them.

Well, then, I agree with Hazlitt, who was a very shrewd thinker—that men's characters do not alter much after their earliest years. The boys that I knew well at school are the same boys now. The beard was rudimentary then:

it is fully developed now. That is the chief difference. One boy was mean in playing at marbles ; and he is mean now in playing for high office and great dignities. Another was profuse with bull's-eyes and toffy : a large experience of life has not tamed his liberality ; and, when the poor fellow has nothing else to give, he offers you his best wishes, and is ready to go anywhere or do anything for you. Milverton took me aside in the cricket-field at our school to prove to me that the repeal of the corn laws must be carried, and that the British aristocracy would suffer a great deal if they made too prolonged a resistance. He took me aside this morning to pour out to me his wailings about the increase of taxation. In neither case was I as much agitated by what he told me as I ought to have been. We preserve our characters exactly.

But I should like to consider character more minutely, and to remark with Milverton, for here I agree with him, what an enormous amount of tolerance is needed in regarding the actions of men when you take into consideration the essential difference of their characters.

Look at the difference of a vain man from one who is indifferent to vanity—of a sensitive man from a hard man—of a kind from a cruel man. These differences of character are, as I contend, marked from the first ; and it is perfect madness to expect that the vain man will not be influenced by his vanity right through every transaction of his life.

Then consider all the permutations and combinations according to which these various qualities may be worked into a character. The same quality does not pervade and leaven the character uniformly. The human soul does not resemble one of those strange caverns in which it appears animals took shelter, where all the hyena-bones are found together, all the wolf-bones side by side, the elephant remains by themselves, the skeletons of deer by themselves,

and the whole thing fossilised into exact compartments. But in man there will be a layer of fierce hyena, or of timid deer, running through the nature in the most uncertain and tortuous manner. Nero is sensitive to poetry and music, but not to human suffering: Marcus Aurelius is tolerant and good to all men but Christians. Certainly, qualities are often inserted in a character in a most curious and inharmonious way; and the end is, that you have a man who is the strangest mixture of generosity and meanness, of kindness and severity, even of dishonesty and nobleness. Real men are not at all like chessmen. The Queen is not debarred from the knight's move: the little pawn will advance sometimes with all the sweep and rectangularity of a castle; and the bishop is not always diagonal in his way of proceeding.

Then the passions enter. Sometimes these just fit in, unfortunately, with good points of character, so that one man may be ruined by a passion which another and a worse man would have escaped unhurt from.

Then, there are the circumstances to which a character is exposed, and which vary so much, that it hardly seems that people are living in the same world, so different are to them the outward things they have to contend with. Returning to my chess simile: there are no well-defined squares to move upon; nothing is quite black, and nothing is quite white.

Altogether the human being becomes such a complicated creature, that though at last you may know something about some one specimen—what it will say and what it will do on a given occasion—you never know enough about the creature to condemn it.

*Dunsford.* This is all very sound talk on the part of Ellesmere; and I see that Miss Vernon approves of it amazingly: but it is a little unlike the Ellesmere we have been accustomed to listen to.



*Milverton.* He might have pursued the subject further. There is temperament, which is something different from character, which often obscures it, and utterly bewilders our views about it. I remember travelling once with two brothers in a very hot country where we suffered greatly from mosquitos. I recollect on a particular occasion that one of the brothers would not suffer his brother or anybody else to sleep quietly for a minute, but passed the night in raging and raving against these little tiresome insects. The other brother exhorted him to patience. He replied, "'Tis very well for you to talk: these cursed creatures do not molest you." When morning came the patient brother was scarcely recognisable; but he had suffered in silence. What a difference in temperament between the two brothers! You might naturally conclude that their different ways of enduring trouble and vexation of all kinds must have been indicated by their different ways of enduring mosquitos. Not a bit of it. There would come, for instance, another vexation, similar in kind, that would find the patient brother irritable and intolerant, and the other calm, placid, and victorious. It requires an immense knowledge of individual men before you can appreciate the diversities and peculiarities of their temperaments.

Altogether I agree with Ellesmere, who must, I think, be somewhat unwell as he is so different from the usual Ellesmere, that man is too complicated a creature for his fellow-men to indulge in much blame of him;<sup>1</sup> though this

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<sup>1</sup> I take a peculiar view of this matter, which I did not trouble my friends with then. It is this—that all hasty judgment of our fellow-creatures is such an unscientific proceeding. You comment upon another man's conduct, and attribute motives to him. Now an ingenious and imaginative person—a lawyer making a speech for him—might show many different motives of equal probability. You fix upon one, perhaps because it is consonant to your own mind and nature, or because it is the uppermost or easiest one to conjecture;

need not prevent us from protesting loudly against many of his actions. For instance, I protest loudly against the actions of certain warlike monarchs, but I have no doubt that if I knew their characters, their circumstances, and their temperaments intimately, I should be much more inclined to pity than to blame.

*Ellesmere.* It requires a large amount of tolerance to be tolerant of such people.

*Dunsford.* There is a much harder work for tolerance than that : it is to be tolerant of intolerant people ; to see how natural their intolerance is, and in fact thoroughly to comprehend it and feel for it. This is the last stage of tolerance, which few men, I suppose, in this world attain.

*Mr. Midhurst.* Tolerance appears to me as yet an unworked mine. Men have got a little of the gold which has been washed down by the rivers ; have even perhaps gathered some of the surface ore ; but have not yet made their way into what Australian miners call the "reefs." We have ceased to persecute men largely about differences in religion. Yet this is but a beginning ; and all the ways of men, the "windy ways," as Tennyson calls them, will have to be looked at with a spirit of toleration which is yet undreamt of.

*Milverton.* There is one great difficulty to be surmounted ; and that is, how to make hard, clear, righteous men, who have not sinned much, have not suffered much,

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but really you often ignore the doctrine of chances, and perhaps you would find upon strict calculation that the chances are fairly four to one against your having named the right motive. As the winning horse is often "a dark one" (is not that the right phrase?), at any rate not the favourite, so, after all, some obscure and improbable motive is often the true cause of a man's actions. I maintain that our condemnation of others is often as unscientific as it is unchristian. This is a pedantic way of putting the thing, but an old fellow of a college may be excused for a little pedantry.

are not afflicted by strong passions, who have not many ties in the world, and who have been easily prosperous—how to make such men tolerant.

Think of this for a moment. For a man who has been rigidly good to be supremely tolerant, would require an amount of insight which seems to belong only to the greatest genius. I have often fancied that the main scheme of the world is to create tenderness in man: and I have a notion that the outer world would change if man were to acquire more of this tenderness. You see at present he is obliged to be kept down by urgent wants of all kinds, or he would otherwise have more time and thought to devote to cruelty and discord. If he *could* live in a better world, I mean in a world where nature was more propitious, I believe he would have such a world. And in some mysterious way I suspect that nature is constrained to adapt herself to the main impress of the characters of the average beings in the world.

*Ellesmere.* These are very extraordinary thoughts.

*Dunsford.* They are not far from Christianity.

*Milverton.* You must admit, Ellesmere, that Christianity has never been tried. I do not ask you to canvass doctrinal and controversial matters. But take the leading precepts: read the "Sermon on the Mount," and see if it is the least like the doctrines of modern life.

*Dunsford.* I cannot help thinking, when you are all talking of tolerance, why you do not use the better word, of which we hear something in Scripture: charity.

*Milverton.* If I were a clergyman, there is much that I should dislike to have to say (being a man of very dubious mind): there is much also that I should dislike to have to read; but I should feel that it was a great day for me, when I had to read out that short but most abounding chapter from St. Paul on charity. The more you study that chapter, the more profound you find it. The way that the Apostle

begins is most remarkable ; and I doubt if it has been often duly considered. We think much of knowledge in our own times ; but consider what an early Christian must have thought of one who possessed the gift of tongues, or the gift of prophecy. Think also what the early Christian must have thought of the man who possessed "all faith." Then listen to St. Paul's summing up of these great gifts in comparison with charity. Dunsford will give us the words. You remember them, I dare say.

*Dunsford.* <sup>1</sup> "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

*Milverton.* You will let me proceed, I know, if it is only to hear more from Dunsford of that chapter. I have said that the early Christian would have thought much of the man who possessed the gifts of tongues, of prophecy, of faith. But how he must have venerated the rich man who entered into his little community, and gave up all his goods to the poor. Again, how the early Christian must have regarded, with longing admiration, the first martyrs for his creed. Then hear what St. Paul says of this outward charity, and of this martyrdom, when compared with the infinitely more difficult charity of the soul and martyrdom of the temper. Dunsford will proceed with the chapter.

*Dunsford.* "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

*Milverton.* Pray go on, Dunsford.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ch. xiii.

*Dunsford.* "Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; charity envieth not ; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,

"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ;

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ;

"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away."

*Milverton.* That is surely one of the most beautiful things that has ever been written by man. It does not do to talk much after it. Let us proceed with our walk.

We walked on in silence for some time, until, turning home, we came suddenly in view of Donati's comet. It was that night when Arcturus was close to the nucleus of the comet. I think it was the most majestic sight I ever saw in the Heavens.

*Ellesmere.* And so you think, Milverton, that if we were good enough for it, we should have a better world to live in ; and perhaps some celestial messenger, like this, instead of dripping from its "horrid hair" pestilence and war, "affrighting monarchs with the fear of change," would be the bearer of some beneficent change of climate.

*Milverton.* My dear friend, I say nothing of the sort. Most presumptuous would be the man who should, with our small knowledge, prophesy minutely about the changes of the earth. But I do hold, and we may surely be indulged in harmless hopes of this kind, that if we were better—if we were softer and kinder to one another—Nature would be softer and kinder to us. If you like, however, to keep strictly within the bounds of experience, you must

own that, even by human agencies, the amelioration of nature has for the most part proceeded *pari passu* with the amelioration of man.

Ellesmere made no reply ; and I was glad that he did not. I think even he was deeply impressed with the solemnity of the scene. We naturally talked of Astronomy, and of the great hopes which this boundless universe holds out for man. "In my Father's house are many mansions," was a theme which I ventured to dwell upon. Mr. Midhurst, true to his melancholy views to the last, muttered to himself, but I overheard him, the following lines :—

" Night brings out stars as sorrows show us truths :  
Though many, yet they help not ; bright they light not.  
They are too late to serve us : and sad things  
Are aye too true. We never see the stars  
Till we can see nought but them. So with truth."<sup>1</sup>

One observation of Milverton's, as to the appearance of the Universe, struck me as new and very remarkable. I had better give it in his own words.

*Milverton.* Yes ; I say that the whole Heavens may present to superior beings the appearance of a solid body. You all recollect what Boscovich and other physical writers have said about the ultimate atoms of matter—that they do not touch, and that they have what we call repulsion for one another. That distance from each other which is requisite for the ultimate atoms of this gaunt tree we are looking upon, which yet presents a solid appearance, may find perhaps an exact parallel in the distances of these stars

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<sup>1</sup> *Festus.*

one from another. They may therefore, to a Being who could behold them after the same fashion as we behold this tree, present the appearance of solidity. I cannot help thinking that no space is lost; and that the whole Universe is as much occupied as the space which this tree seems to occupy. There are small creatures to whom that stone appears compact, while all the rest perhaps that it can behold, seems wide and disjointed. Yet to us these wide disjointed things are solid.

I do not know how you may take my fancies, but at any rate, I trust you feel with me, that there is immortal consolation in the aspect of these heavens which we are allowed to look upon, probably the greatest physical privilege permitted to man; and that from this vast contemplation we may derive some comfort for every sorrow, some alleviation for every regret, and some benign hope to throw a ray of cheerfulness into the gloomiest depth of despondency.

Little more was said by any of us; and I am glad that it was after such a conversation, in which all our feelings were united, and which breathed much of calmness and of hope, that my labours ended, and that I have nothing more now to report of the sayings or doings of my "Friends in Council."

THE END.





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